Adventure

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Vol. 92. No. 4. **June 15th, 1935** **Twice a Month**

Cleopatra's Promise (a novelette) . . **TALBOT MUNDY** **2**

Over the mummy-strewn sand they charged—kilted Greek officers, Arabs, Romans, Thracians, Nubians in lion skins with ox-hide shields and iron spears that flashed to the tune of their thundering battle song. Tros waited, back to a wall, with a handful of Norse battle-axe men, and a young queen in armor.

The Golden Emblem . . . . . **BILL ADAMS** **58**

She steered ill. She waddled like a washerwoman. She was a ship of disaster. But she had a fine name and a crew who called her a lady, *The Golden Emblem,* worth fighting for against any hazard.

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The Kitten . . . . . **G. FREDERIC PELHAM, JR.** **99**

Night after night the young lieutenant and his ghost patrol slipped out and terrorized the German lines. Then an advance of their own regiment found them all dead, all stripped of their puttees, the men shot through the brain and the lieutenant, unmarked, with an empty automatic in his lifeless hand.

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CLEOPATRA'S PROMISE

A novelette by **Talbot Mundy**

CHAPTER I

THE ANGER OF TROS

THERE was no disguising the trireme's injuries, nor her commander's discontent. Tros had buried his dead in Cyprus, in a cave near Salamis. They had been so many that the lower oar-bank could no longer be manned. There were smashed bulwarks, hastily repaired but unpainted. There were scars where the enemy ships had grappled and ground the trireme's flanks, like killer-sharks fast to a whale, in a storm that rolled them gunwales-under.

The purple sails, bent on for effect—there was no wind—emphasized the battle-havoc. The victorious trireme appeared to be limping home from ignominious defeat—an unfortunate impression to create in Alexandria. The Alexandrines loved successful people and proofs of success.

Tros glowered as he paced his quarter-deck and studied the magnificent harbor-front. It was as busy as ever. One might imagine there were no such people as Romans, at civil war with one another for the right to plunder the whole known world. Ahiram, second-in-command, in Tros' third-best cloak, said something about the splendor of the marble buildings in the morning sun. He came of a silent race, and it was not often that he volunteered remarks about anything except the management of the ship, but the strain of his captain's silence had become too much even for his taciturn disposition. Tros stared at him a moment, gave an order to the helmsman, and then answered with cold, passionate anger that made the Phoenician flinch:

"Aye, a fine May morning! Counting wounded who are fit to die, we have lost one hundred and eleven men. And to what good purpose?"

Ahiram sniffed the off-shore zephyr that bore the mingled smell of flowers, spices, vegetables, animals and men. It was good in his salty nostrils. He retorted:

"You've your cabin stuffed with chests of gold enough to buy one of yon palaces. If I were you, I'd buy a palace, instead of wanting to sail around the world. Maybe the world isn't round. You only think it is. You don't know. And the sea is a hard life. Courtiers have it easy. Three special cooks to stew a sow's teats for your breakfast, and a brace of wenches to relacquer your toe-nails every time you kick a blackamoor for being late with the wine!"

It was nothing new that the Phoenician's thoughts should run in that vein after a month at sea. But the helmsman's thoughts also were home-coming seamanly eager. Tros rebuked him:

"Eyes on the course, you Argive satyr!"

Every man who could find an excuse to be on deck, or who could escape a decurion's vigilance, was leaning overside to stare at the Rhakotis wharf, where the bawds were waiting, gay in all the colors of the rainbow. Defeat or victory were all one to those parasites, so be the crew had money.

Ahiram, thinking of shore-leave, tried to change his commander's humor. Tros was quite capable of withholding the crew's wages, and Ahiram's too, for the

sake of wharf-side morality. Dreadful thought.

"And the queen? She would be feeling good," said Ahiram.

"She has seen our sails since daybreak," Tros answered. "She rises early—stands naked, facing East, at sunrise. By pigeon post from Salamis to Tyre, and thence by runner, she will have had secret information of our victory at sea—aye, and of more besides."

"She should be pleased," said Ahiram. "Her own fleet had deserted to the Romans. We've saved Salamis from the pirates. We've outsmarted the Romans. We've sold the Egyptian corn and got paid for it. We've established Queen Cleopatra's sister as safe as a peg in a hole on the throne of Cyprus. The queen has had plenty of time to hear all about it. She'll be pleased to see us—aye, and generous."

Tros stared. It amazed him that a man could be so simple-minded. "Does your Sidonian intellect perceive the evidences of her pleasure? Where are the garlanded boats to bring us greeting? Not even a signal from the Pharos! Not even the hog-eyed harbor-master in his galley! Not even Esias' boat! *Phagh!* She has probably warned Jew-Esias I am out of favor. The more you do for kings and queens, the less they trust you and the more they want."

"But you're no easy one yourself, Lord Captain," said Ahiram. "True, you pay well, and you're a man of your word. But the price a man pays for serving you well is to be given an even harder task."

"Hard over! Ease your sheets now, Ahiram; there might come a flurry of wind. Down haul, and stow sails. Cymbals! Starboard, half-ahead! Port side, half-astern! Easy all! Starboard, half-ahead! Easy!"

Tros guided the trireme, to the clash of the signaling cymbals, and with gestures to the helmsman, through the narrow entrance of the inner harbor of Rhakotis, where there were docks and repair-yards, hemmed in by offices, lumber-yards, storage-sheds and taverns in a spider-web maze of irregular streets.

He was going to have to haul out, and no bones about it. The trireme leaked. She had been damaged under-water by the headlong, full sail impact against pirates' hulls. Esias' largest hauling-out dock was vacant, so he put a crew ashore to warp the ship into it, with Jack-of-all-jobs Conops and the ten-Jew bodyguard to beat the women back and give the crew a chance to handle the lines. There were fifty strumpets screaming with laughter and feigning Bacchanalian frenzy, and another hundred swarming across the roof of Esias' office, while their owners watched them through the barred gate.

No sign of the one man in Alexandria on whom Tros felt he could rely. The temple gongs were clanging for some festival or other, but that was no reason why Esias should be conspicuously absent. Jews didn't recognize pagan festivals if they could help it, but there was not even one of Esias' partners on the wharf to do the honors and to give the last breathless news of what had happened while Tros was at sea out of touch with events.

It was impossible to keep the crew any longer aboard. From Cyprus by way of Tarsus to Alexandria had been a toilsome voyage against a head wind, short of provisions and water. Tros had an unfashionable objection to cutting the throats of wounded men, so one of Esias' sheds would have to be turned into a hospital, and the Osirian priests, who were pretty good doctors, would have to be sent for and suitably persuaded with gifts of young black bulls and money. The trireme's doctor, assisted by the bards, had done his best, but he was overworked and short of bandages.

The moment the oars were all stowed in the overhead racks the rowers

swarmed on deck, each man with his little bag of personal possessions. The women began to swarm aboard, and there was no stopping them until Tros made it known that there would be no pay for the crew until the trireme had been hauled out and stripped ready for Esias' shipwrights.

Ahead, leading between city slums, there was a ramp made of balks of timber, with enormous capstans at the upper end. There were cranes, sheer-legs, workshops, everything for repairing, building or rebuilding four ships at a time, but all the gear would have to go ashore before repairs could commence. The women began to lose enthusiasm. The crew clamored to be put to work and get it done with.

Tros went ashore. He strode into Esias' gloomy office with the air of a man looking for trouble, as if more of it might help him to conquer what he had already. There were plenty of slaves at the long drafting tables, plenty of clerks to bow and be obsequious, but no Esias and not even a partner. There was an atmosphere of unspoken unwelcome, if not ill will, slaves taking their cue from displeased masters. However, a slave in a brown smock, walking backward, opened a door and admitted Tros into an inner office, shutting the door behind him with a peculiar, stealthy movement that suggested a trap.

HILLEL, the man whom Tros least liked of Esias' five partners, sat staring across a table that was piled with scrolls. He was a middle-aged man with a keen face and a pronounced stoop from the shoulders, whose hands clutched invisible things with nervous indecision.

"Lord Captain Tros," he said, without rising, "you were better at sea. You have brought your ship into a harbor full of intrigues of which no man can foresee the outcome."

"Where is my friend Esias?"

"He was summoned to the palace as soon as your ship was sighted. There is no word from him since. I think the queen suspects him of intriguing with you. Lord captain—if he is in the dungeon—being tortured—as his friend, are you not willing to spare his old bones by making haste to tell the queen your secrets? He won't tell them. He will never tell without your permission."

"You are inventing alarms," Tros answered.

"Am I? It is said that you sold the corn fleet to the Romans."

"I did. I have the money."

"Lord Tros, there is a plot that has been discovered. They are taking many important people to the dungeons. It is being said you have conspired with the Romans to overthrow Queen Cleopatra, and to put her sister Arsinoe of Cyprus on the throne in her stead! Have you her with you on the trireme?"

Tros laughed, angrily. "Am I a madman? Arsinoe is in Cyprus. The money for Esias' corn is in my cabin. Send your slaves to carry it here and get it counted. Give me a receipt and credit me with my fifth of it all. Get the pay-roll from my clerk. Pay the crew half their wages, after they have hauled out. Has Esias sold my pearls?"

"He sold them to the queen."

"For a fair price?"

"An incredible price. But let him tell you, if they haven't flayed him to death! The queen has the pearls. We have the money. But where is Esias?"

"I will see the queen and ask her."

"Lord Tros, you were better at sea! You were better at sea! The queen may order your arrest. She is afraid. She is a Ptolemy. A fearful Ptolemy is a deadlier menace to her friends than a poisonous serpent! She suspects every one."

"Of what?"

"Of conspiring to kill her and put her sister Arsinoe on the throne. There is a rumor that Arsinoe is on her way to Egypt. It is said that the Roman pro-

consul Cassius is sending an army to her aid from Syria. It is being said that you plotted it, and that Esias knows. It is said it was you who persuaded the Egyptian war fleet to desert to Cassius, that there might be no fleet in Alexandria to resist invasion. And Esias—"

"Is not a fool, such as you are, Hillel. Neither is the queen such a fool that she would risk the enmity of all the Jews in Alexandria by torturing Esias—nor such a fool as to believe Arsinoe could land in Egypt in advance of a Roman army and escape death. You are full of rumors and they belly-ache you, Hillel. I go to the palace. Order me a litter and summon the master-shipwrights. Have them grease the ways thoroughly before they haul out. Can you rid the wharf of those wenches?"

"Lord Captain Tros, at least a third of them are spies expressly sent to learn from your men what you were doing in Cyprus, in Tarsus and elsewhere. I ordered the wharf-gate locked. They came over the roof. I ordered them driven away, and I received a warning, from no other than the personal slave of the chief of police, not to interfere with the rights of their master's guild."

"Clear me a shed for a hospital."

"Lord Tros, send your wounded to a temple."

"Nay. Let them lie in comfort."

"As for the trireme, frankly, I would not dare to—"

Tros interrupted. "This, Hillel, is a list of the repairs that I know need doing. Check that and write me an estimate. But as for what needs doing below water, we shall know when she is hauled out, so summon the shipwrights."

"Lord Tros—"

"I believe you heard me, Hillel. Attend to it. Order a litter—a good one."

Hillel shrugged his shoulders and sent a slave for a hired litter. Tros overheard the command.

"I will ride in a private litter," he remarked, casually, as if he were ordering the next course of a meal, but his leonine eyes looked dangerous and Hillel noticed it. He explained:

"Lord Captain Tros, you are out of favor. Who is there who would dare to lend his private litter? In such times as these, when no one knows who is to be accused next, who shall lend his litter and liveried bearers to a man denounced as a pirate?"

"Who denounced me?"

"One of the queen's ministers."

Tros threw back his shoulders. He astonished even Hillel, who knew better than to expect mild measures from the man whom Cleopatra had employed to do what not one of her own commanders could have been trusted, or would have dared to attempt.

"Send your best dressed slave to the palace to say that Lord Captain Tros awaits a litter to convey him to an audience with the queen."

"Lord captain, what if she sends a guard instead, to take you to the dungeon!"

Tros snorted. "She is not a coward. She is not a reptile, nor a born fool. She and I have been friends too many years for her to put me to that indignity, on the strength of a mere rumor."

"Lord Tros, dozens of her friends are in the dungeons!"

"Send for the royal litter!"

He strode out of the office and watched Esias' slaves remove the treasure from the cabin—watched the wounded being laid on the wharf in a dismal row—watched the grease being laid on the ramp—ordered all the gear and even the arrow-engines unshipped—foresaw and attended to a hundred details—until at last, to the confusion of Hillel, a litter did come from the palace, borne by eight men in Queen Cleopatra's livery and preceded by a eunuch who was insolent and elegant enough to be the Queen's own usher.

There was no bodyguard provided. That was the only suggestion that Tros

might be in disfavor. But he was in no mood to go unsuitably attended. He summoned his ten Jews, ex-gladiators. They looked splendid enough in their polished armor to be any one's escort; but Conops, with his one eye and his slit lip, in a kilt and a tasseled red cap, looked not so praiseworthy. Nevertheless, it did not occur to Tros to enter upon deadly danger without Conops at his heels.

"Tidy yourself, you filthy dock-rat! Where's your armor? Stick that knife inside your shirt and gird a sword on. Try to look less like an ape that fell into a sewer. Shall I go through the streets of Alexandria ashamed of the commander of my escort? Spruce yourself!"

"Aye, aye, master."

"And remember not to touch your forelock to the Queen's guards! Be insolent."

"Aye, aye."

"Lord Tros," said Hillel, "armed slaves? Armed slaves in the city? It is known that those men are slaves and that Esias gave them to you."

"I know the law," Tros answered.

"So do the royal guards!" said Hillel. "Those arrogant dogs—"

"Shall bite a bad bone! Be assured of it, Hillel!"

Conops, changing even his normal habits with his master's mood, bethought him of dignity and sent one of the Jews to bring his armor. He made another Jew spit-and-polish an imagined rust-spot. Even the armor could not make him look less bow-legged, nor give him height, but he looked at least business-like in the gleaming crestless helmet, and there was no doubt at all of his grip on his ten men.

"Fall in, you sons of Abraham! Five of you to each side of the litter! Now then, pick your heels up! March like gladiators! Clank like one man!

"Ready, master! Lord captain's escort, by the centre, forward, quick march! Left! Left! Left! You're out of step, Josephus—do you think it's a dance you're doing for the dock-side wenches? Left! Left!"

The dock gate opened wide and Tros went forth, to he knew not, and Conops cared not, what fate.

CHAPTER II

"GIVE THESE MEN THEIR FREEDOM."

THE eunuch got lost in the crowd. He was so full of his own importance that he walked straight ahead with his nose in the air, and when a polyglot swarm of loafers rushed from watching some street-corner acrobats to the more exciting spectacle of a tavern fight between Greeks and Gabinian ex-soldiers, some of them still in the rags of Roman uniform, the eunuch remained ignorant for several minutes that he was no longer being followed by his cortege.

Tros had whispered to Conops, and Conops rose to the occasion. The litter-bearers protested, but the ten Jews prodded them as if they were asses, and in a moment the litter was going at a dog-trot up a side street, taking a devious but comparatively unobstructed course toward the splendid municipal building —not, however, toward the front entrance, whose marble steps were packed with people waiting to see a religious procession.

Being a festival day, the courts and the principal municipal offices were closed. The whole long marble-fronted, colonnaded Street of Canopus was a mass of spectators in holiday mood, through which the chariots of exquisites were being driven headlong by charioteers who enjoyed being cursed, and whose owners could afford to be fined if the police could get near enough to take their names.

It was a dinning, ululating, pulsing city, full of street fights and laughter and

flowers, with the wealth all in view and the poverty kept where it belonged, out of sight in the meaner by-ways. Nothing—absolutely nothing was allowed to interfere with Alexandrine gaiety. Even business—and it cost money to be gay and splendid—ceased while the Alexandrines played.

But from sunrise to sunset, three hundred and sixty-five days in a year, one could pay taxes; so there was one office, entered from the rear of the municipal building, whose doors never closed during daylight hours.

Two or three hundred yards away from the door of that office Conops collected the Jews' swords and piled them beside Tros in the litter. He even piled their helmets in the litter to complete their air of innocence.

In armor, without helmets or weapons, they looked ridiculous. They were jeered by the crowd. But they reached the office door without having to use their fists on any one except the litter-bearers, who felt like lost sheep without their eunuch and suspected, too, that they were being put to unlawful purpose and would be whipped when the eunuch found them.

Tros led the ten Jews into the office and lined them up in front of a long counter, at which sat seven of the most efficient bureaucrats on earth—three to watch the three who did the business, and one to make sure that the watchers themselves did no thieving.

There was no astonishment, no comment, no expression of special interest. It was quite usual for Alexandrines to select festival days for rewarding faithful slaves. Tros was abrupt and businesslike:

"Give these ten men their freedom. Here are the certificates of ownership. Here are the receipts for the tax on previous transfer, showing the value at which they were then assessed."

"Ten per cent again," said an official. "This is taxed as a transfer of ownership to the slave himself."

Tros paid it, wincing. The officials signed and countersigned ten certificates on parchment. There was a charge for the parchment. The chief official sealed the ten certificates. There was a charge for the seal. A corresponding entry was made on the archive-scroll. There was a charge for the entry. Then each Jew received his utterly unexpected certificate of freedom. Tros cut short their jubilation.

"Fall in! Stand at attention! Have I loosed a lot of sentimentalists? If I buy garlic, do I kiss the seller? You have paid for your freedom—earned it, like men, in battle. Now earn friendship, by obedience as freedmen, rather than as slaves who must obey or be whipped. Form two deep! Right! Forward, by the right, quick march!"

Outside Conops returned their weapons. He observed their faces. He detected symptoms:

"Sulphury Cocytus! Up-snoots, is it, proud and lofty? Which of you wants to fight me for who buys wine? Which two of you? No takers? Swallow this, then: what a slave does well, a freedman does exactly twice as well, or he hears from me about it with the butt-end of a crank-bar! Stand dignified—this isn't Yom Kippur, or the Feast of Esther! By the right—dress! Cock your helmet straight, you! And for the love of your mother Jezebel, try to march as if you never wore leg-irons!"

He was talking for time and to distract attention. There was something going on that Tros might not wish to be noticed by his escort. A slave had slipped a note into Tros' hand just as he was getting into the litter. A very well-dressed Alexandrine, in a two-horsed chariot at a street corner not far away, was watching, expecting a signal from Tros or an answer by the slave, and Tros appeared to be considering what to do or to say.

Then at last the queen's eunuch came, sweating and very indignant; he had evidently been mocked and not too gently handled by the crowd as he traced the litter through the swarming streets. He tried to reach Tros, to give him a piece of his mind, but Conops interfered, blocking his way:

"Hold hard, capon! You'll be spitted soon enough without crowding your betters! What's the excuse you have to offer? What d'ye mean by sneaking off and leaving the Lord Captain in the streets without a peacock to show his importance? Betting on tomorrow's races, were you?"

The eunuch was half-hysterical with anger. He minced thin-lipped profanity:

"Sailor!" Alexandria knew no worse epithet. "This is a royal litter! The queen's!"

"Can the queen go where she pleases?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, here's her litter, where its rider pleases!"

"Drunkard! I have orders to convey your master to the palace!"

"Then why didn't you? I've half a mind to hand you over to the Civil Guard for—"

Tros had made his signal, and the very well-dressed man had left his chariot; he was talking fast and Tros was listening, in a deeply recessed doorway. Conops kept the eunuch too indignant to observe what was happening; he imagined Tros was behind the litter-curtains, but he couldn't get past Conops to discover his mistake, and when he screamed to the bearers to march they were prevented by the Jews.

Tros, done listening in the doorway, thumped his fist into his left hand:

"No, I tell you! Do you know what no means? I will have no part in treason. You take advantage of my hatred of bearing tales to come and tell me of a plot that would cost the lives of dozens of you, were I even to whisper your name!"

"As for that, Lord Tros, your life is as easy to take as other men's. Betray me, and sign your own death warrant!"

"Keep your threats for cowards, Aristobulus! I will give you a piece of information—not for your own sake, for I think you a loose-tongued lecher who would sell his best friend, but for the sake of better men, who might be swept into the same net with you: the Princess Arsinoe is not in Egypt. I left her in Cyprus—"

"But I say she is in Egypt!"

"You call me a liar? Are you armed?"

"No."

"Then govern your speech. I say, I left Arsinoe in Cyprus, well watched, guarded by Roman soldiers and a company of pirates—eighty men whom I made prisoner and turned over to her for a bodyguard."

"Couldn't she come with her pirates to Egypt?"

"About as easily as Daedalus flew from Crete to Sicily. Give her wings and a fair wind, scare away the eagles, and she might get half-way. Then she'd have a long swim, Aristobulus."

"So you are on the queen's side."

"I am not on your side."

"Did you know the queen has denounced you as a pirate?"

"I know she hasn't."

"Well, her minister did."

"That is different. The Queen of Egypt doesn't denounce. She kills, and explains or is silent. Denunciation is the cackle of a sail-trimmer, guessing himself into the queen's good graces. No one will ever need to denounce you, Aristobulus. Your friends will find your mangled carcass on the city trash-heap, unless you can think of a less clownish plot than this that you have told me."

"Look to it, Lord Tros, that you tell no one!"

"Look to your own tongue. Mine obeys me!"

Tros returned to the litter, and was into it, behind the curtains, before the eunuch saw him. There was a crowd eagerly listening to the argument between him and Conops. The Alexandrines despised sailors, and a sailor in armor, with bow-legs and only one eye, was an obvious buff for anybody's humor, from a safe distance.

And court eunuchs were as much despised as hated. The local wits were doing their ribald utmost to incite Conops to use his weapon.

But no two pairs of landsmen's eyes were as good as the one that glinted beneath the rim of Conop's helmet. He had seen Tros return to the litter. He saw another man, not so well dressed, approach and whisper through the curtains. So he invented a brand-new set of reasons for delay.

He accused the eunuch of having demanded money, and of having decamped because Tros refused to pay him. Tros had spoken through the curtains to no less than three different whisperers before Conops suddenly cut short the argument by ordering the Jews to fall in again and resume the march.

He put himself at their head. The eunuch, unable to force his way through the crowd, had to follow the procession, fuming.

CONOPS led toward the palace by short cuts. He avoided the densely thronged Street of Canopus and made for the guardhouse at the main gate by a route forbidden to the public. There were armed guards lurking, ready to pounce on intruders and either rob and beat them or turn them over to the police, but they recognized the royal litter, and besides, eleven well armed men were too many to tackle. But the main gate was another story.

There the mercenary, polyglot, magnificently accoutred guards were lined up to keep petitioners from invading the palace grounds, and to keep a way clear for the going and coming of palace traffic. Captain Leander in leopard-skin and crimson strolled to the litter and drew the curtain.

"Mystery of mysteries!" he lisped. "So Tros is with us!" It had been "Lord Tros—Lord Captain Tros" six weeks ago, and "Remember me, Lord Captain, when you need a favor!" He pretended to study a list of names on a parchment scroll. "You have a permit?"

"I have access to the palace."

"Ah! But there have been changes recently. The old list has been canceled, and I can't find your name on the new one."

"Send in my name to the queen."

"She is absent."

"I will wait for her."

"She has left no command to admit you."

"Why, then, was the litter sent to bring me hither?"

Tros got out, and Conops came and buckled on his sword. The officer was as tall as Tros, and looked taller in his plumed helmet, but he looked frail in comparison. He stepped backward, and two of his men stepped forward, before he could resume his careless ease of manner and vaguely contemptuous tone of voice.

"I believe the Lord Chamberlain wished to let you know that there have been reports concerning you that make your presence at the palace not so welcome as formerly."

"So!"

Another officer approached and whispered. Leander nodded.

"There is a law against armed slaves. Have you anything in writing, Tros, to establish your right to ignore the law? These Jews of yours were given to you by Esias. They are armed, unless my eyes deceive me. I was drunk last night at the palace banquet, but those look to me like swords and armor."

He made a gesture. A platoon of

twenty men stepped forward and grounded the butts of their spears with an ominous thud. The crowd of onlookers became excited; all Alexandrine crowds became excited at the least excuse, but to see Lord Captain Tros descending from a royal litter to be put under arrest by the queen's guards was sheer drama. They began to shout:

"Pirate! Samothracian! Traitor! Judophile!"

That last word was a danger signal. Almost the easiest way to start a riot was to insinuate that Jews were in some way involved. One-third of the population, Jews were two-thirds of the political problem, popular and unpopular in about equal proportion, always enjoying special privileges, always being persecuted.

That the crowd accused Tros of befriending Jews suggested that Esias might be in trouble. The crowd took its cue from the court. Perhaps the queen had turned against Esias.

Tros began to wish he had left his Jews on board the ship, not from fear of the crowd, nor of the queen's guards, but because he needed to be less conspicuous in order to learn what he wanted to know. A man in the midst of a racial riot isn't likely to learn much more than a possible way of escape.

He commanded his Jews to produce their evidence that they were freedmen. Leander examined the documents, flicking his teeth with his thumb-nail, at an obvious loss what to do or to say next.

"You may tell the queen," said Tros, "that I won't submit myself to further insult from her lackeys."

Without saluting he turned his back and marched away in the midst of his escort, grim faced, leaving the stuttering eunuch to take the litter where he pleased and to invent what lies he pleased. The crowd made way for him, gaping, doubting whether to enjoy his embarrassment or to marvel at his heroic bearing.

He looked not at all like a man in disfavor, disgrace or distress. There was scorn in his eyes, and on his shoulders an air of relief. He looked free of the earth, as if he foresaw great events and a wide horizon.

His ten Jews looked crestfallen, for it was a poor start for their first day's freedom; and Conops, with his helmet a bit to one side, resembled nothing on earth but a Levantine sailor alert for trouble, glancing backward, suspicious, in fear of pursuit.

But Tros, too splendidly contemptuous to shrug his shoulders, strode like a conqueror.

They had marched all the way along the waterfront and reached the Heptastadium, where a wide street crossed the city at right angles to the Street of Canopus, before Tros halted. For a minute or two he stood with his back to the city and stared at the gigantic marble lighthouse on Pharos Island, and at the gay-hued crowd that swarmed along the connecting causeway—that causeway from which he had seen Caesar plunge and swim for his life.

"One has followed us, master," said Conops.

"Man or woman?"

"Eunuch."

"From the palace?"

"Aye."

"Let him draw near."

"Master, he appears to have no weapon, but be careful! Such as he would pretend to deliver a note and produce a cubit's length of poisoned Damascus dagger!"

"Little man, if my name were on the death-list, we should be in a dungeon now, awaiting the executioner's convenience. Since we set foot ashore, four different men have tried to fathom me. We are no use dead. The queen needs living legs for her endangered throne."

"Sail away, master! We could haul out in the Piraeus."

"Aye, within range of Brutus' agents!"

"Very well then, in Tyre."

"Within Cassius' grip!"

"Then through the Gates of Hercules and—"

"Aye, and refit on the broad Atlantic!"

"Master, we could get plenty of men from the Balearics."

"Does he draw near?"

"Aye. He looks treacherous. He seems to be waiting his chance to approach unnoticed."

"What is he?"

"A blackamoor—one of the bath attendants."

"Demand his business."

Tros didn't even turn his head. He was still staring at the Pharos—he and his escort forming a little island in the midst of the stream of people swarming toward the city—when Conops returned.

"Master, he bade me say this: The queen is on Lake Mareotis."

Tros nodded. For a minute or two he was silent. Then he turned and they stared at each other.

"Little man, were it not for my good Northmen, who must be found and rescued, I would burn this ship and go elsewhere and build another. But the queen has us cornered."

"Master, let those toss-pot axe-men rot—aye, and the wenching Basques, too!"

"Did I leave you to rot when Caesar's men put out your eye and made you half a sailor?"

"But—"

"Has not Esias a warehouse on the shore of Mareotis?"

"Aye, master, a whole furlong of buildings—stores of stuff from India, and from Punt—hemp, too—and sheds for the slaves. It was there that our Basques made trouble for us by breaking into the compound where Esias keeps the virgins for the household market."

"You were with them, I remember."

"Aye, preventing—"

"To the tune of a virgin for whom I reimbursed Esias for the loss of value."

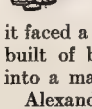
"She seduced me, master! She was a carroty-haired Circassian, with a pair of eyes on her like green jewels. She could see me in the dark. She—"

"Aye, aye, she seduced me. To Esias' warehouse—forward!"

"Escort—atten-shun! Right dress! Hold your chin up, Jeshua! By the center, quick march! Right turn! Left wheel! Left! Left! Pick your heels up, Jeshua! Eyes to the front and try and look like fighting men, not bathhouse beauties! Left! Left! You're freedmen, remember. Don't be afraid to smash some bunions—tread on 'em—bring your feet down with a wallop—let 'em feel your sword-hilt if they won't make way—that's better—left! Left! And now remember who's your captain, and when we get to Esias' sheds, no pitch-and-toss-play with the guards for a chance at the girls. Left! Left! Straighten your helmet, Simeon! Left! Left!"

CHAPTER III

"I PREFER THE QUEEN'S TRAP TO THAT OTHER."



AGAIN, no sign of old Esias. His block of buildings was almost a city itself, marble-walled and colonnaded where it faced a great gap in the city wall, but built of brick in the rear and divided into a maze of crowded compounds.

Alexandria lay between Lake Mareotis and the sea, and the lake-front was a long line of parks and promenade. There were a boat harbor, dozens of wine-booths, some expensive restaurants, and great gaps in the wall, planted with ornamental trees.

The wall was useless for defensive purposes. The cross-city canal emerged beneath a marble bridge not far from Esias' warehouse; westward of that the lake shore was reedy and unconfined by a bulkhead, but to the eastward was

the royal wharf, and beyond that the entire lake front was of well-built masonry.

The size of the lake was unguessable, there were so many islands, fringed with papyrus, many of them white with the marbled roofs of villas. There was always a haze that blended lake and sky, and through that threaded countless boats, some from the Nile through the thronged canal, laden with the produce of the richest land on earth.

There were miles of staked nets and hundreds of fishing boats. And amid them all, blazing with paint, were the awninged yachts of the wealthier Alexandrines.

Leaving his escort in the colonnade, Tros entered the warehouse office—a huge, dim, mysterious chamber beamed with rough-hewn olive, stacked with merchandise and shelves of scrolls, and reeking of spice. Nathan, the third in seniority of Esias' partners, loomed forth from the dimness, solemn as a vulture but almost painfully eager to seem courteous. Six slaves bowed behind him.

"Greeting! Greeting! Where is my friend Esias?" Tros asked.

Instead of answering, Nathan led into an inner office, a mere cabin of a place, with a window that gave a view of a compound where some slaves were being taught to read and write Greek, to increase their market value.

"Lord Captain, Esias does not dare to be seen speaking to you. Neither do I dare to say why—not even to you, within four walls. Esias is with witnesses who will prove he has not spoken to you."

"And he sends me no message."

"Yes. He says 'Look to your life!' And I add my warning to his. Lord

Tros, we have been forbidden to repair your trireme."

"By whom?"

"The less mention of names the better —but by the same minister who has proclaimed you a pirate."

"Publicly?"

"Yes. Officially, no. At a banquet at the palace, where he made a speech to some Roman notables, who have come overland from Cassius' headquarters, seeking money and men, he referred to you by name as a seditious alien, whom Pompeius Magnus would have known how to drive from the sea."

"And the queen?"

"Said nothing."

"Aye. She is good at saying nothing. Did she say it in many words?"

"I know not. My informant told me that throughout all the speech-making she reclined on her divan and played with a Persian kitten, as if the world might go to wrack and ruin for all she cared. And now she is on Pleasure Island, with her child and her women. They say that Cassius' envoys have returned to Syria empty-handed, except for some trashy presents. And her barge lies waiting at the royal boat wharf—"

"And—?"

"One of the royal barge slaves was in here asking for you."

"When?"

"He left not ten minutes ago. He pretended to be needing a new brass thole-pin. But he found fault with what we offered. And he asked what thole-pins you use. Thus, one word leading to another, he conversed about your trireme, and then wondered where you are. He said that the commander of the royal barge would esteem your advice on certain matters, and that it would be well for us to let the barge-commander know if you should show up."

"That is not all, Nathan. There is something else on your mind. What is it?"

"Lord Tros, as you know, I am no alarmist. But there have been others asking for you, two freedmen, clients of a man named Aristobolus. They also wanted news of you if you should turn up."

"Any reason?"

"Yes. They lied. They declared they were clients of Hippias the Rhodian, who is very wealthy and is said to stand high in the queen's favor. But I knew them. The rogues forgot that it was I who sold them, thirteen years ago, when Rabirius the Roman money-lender ruined their former master. They said Hippias wishes to do you a favor, but without attracting public notice. They said Hippias' boat awaits you in the reeds, down near the public bath-house, half a furlong westward. They said, if you will take Hippias' boat, it will convey you to him and he will accompany you into the queen's presence, where he will have much to say in your behalf."

"And—?"

"I happen to know that Hippias is at Dendera, visiting the estate from which he draws his income!"

"And—?"

"They bade me warn you to come alone."

Tros laughed. "Nathan, I prefer the queen's trap to that other! Sell me a change of clothing. I am filthy from the dust of these streets."

"Lord Tros, why risk your life in either trap? It is safer in Rome than in Alexandria! Leave your trireme in Esias' keeping. There is another corn fleet making ready. We can smuggle you and a few of your men to Puteoli. You have a big credit with us. We can give you drafts on our office in Rome, and I will give you a list of the names of senators who can be bribed to do anything, to forget everything, and to appoint the most improbable men to the most important positions. They will vote you Roman citizenship. They will make you a Roman admiral. Then remember your friends!"

"Bring me new clothing, Nathan. I will visit the source of all this mystery. Trick me up like an Alexandrine exquisite."

"But, Lord Tros—"

"And while you get the clothing, send in my man Conops."

Nathan gloomed out to do Tros' bidding and presently Conops clanked into the office. He was never quite certain how to treat these powerful but sometimes timid and almost always deferential Jews, whom Tros so confidently trusted.

He was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, his manner midway between impudence and respect for prodigious wealth, but another mood shone in his eye when he saw through the window the slave-girls learning Greek, and about a dozen others, in a corner of the compound, learning to sing Greek songs and to dance suggestive illustrations of the theme.

"Drinking already, eh? Never mind those women. Stand with your back to the window. Now then: do you know of a place, half a furlong to westward, near the public bath-house, where a boat might make an unseen landing in the reeds?"

"Aye, master. Where the south wind drives the floating islands inshore. It is the place where the runaway slaves hide until nightfall and as often as not get snapped up by crocodiles."

"March your men hither and back, and report to me whether a boat lies hidden. If any one questions you, say where I am. You may say I am here in conference. You may say I am going alone to the royal barge presently. You may say you expect to be drunk tonight, and if they give you some largess for your wine and women, you may buy one small jar of wine, eleven fishing-lines and hooks, and enough bait for a few hours' fishing.

"Then, after you have reported to me, watch; and if you see them leave the boat, you may send eight of your men to seize it, taking the wine and fish-lines with them. You and the two remaining men will guard me as far as the royal boat wharf.

"When I am safe on the royal barge, you may make haste to the other boat —pull off your armor, all of you—row out into the lake, follow the royal barge as closely as you dare, drop anchor as near as you dare to the royal island, and remain there fishing until you see me return on the royal barge, or until I signal for you.

"Better take along some food as well as wine; it may be dark before I need you. And remember: don't be conspicuous. Try to look like fishermen, or at least like a party of Alexandrine tradesmen keeping holiday. Have you understood me?"

"Aye, aye, master."

"Then do it."

THERE was a good deal of fuss about clothing. Nothing but the best would do for Tros, and by the time Nathan's slaves had bathed him and arrayed him in linen good enough for the queen herself, and the expert slave-girls had arranged a chaplet in his hair, Tros looked hardly like the same man.

He looked, if anything, more powerful because the almost transparent linen betrayed the bulge of his muscles; but he looked like a courtier, not a fighting man; he looked too elegant to care for anything but luxuries, wine, women and song. Conops, breathless from his errand, stood and gawked at him.

"Well?"

"Boat, yes. That fellow Aristobolus and four freedmen. Knives. Aristobolus gave me money, as you said he might. He said his name is Hippias, and he asked after your health, so I told him what you said I was to tell him, and he looked as savage as a man whose drink's been spilled. So I came back, and I've

bought the wine and bread and eggs and smoked fish, and some olive oil and lettuce, and a couple of melons. Master, half a jar's an awful little for eleven men, and ten of 'em just received freedom, and not a drink since Cyprus."

"Very well, make it a jar."

"There's no more money."

"Give them a full jar, Nathan. Mind you, if you get as drunk as you did in Cyprus I'll reduce you to the lower oar-bench. You're to divide the wine equally, drink for drink. That is an order. Have you understood it?"

"Aye, aye, master. But I hadn't finished telling. We weren't back here before those four freedmen hit our wake and came strolling along like loafers with nothing better to do. Eastward of here, and this side of the royal boat wharf, there's a wine-garden set in a grove of myrtles and oleanders. That's where they are, and not drinking either —lurking—up to no good."

"Aristobolus still in the boat?"

"Yes, master. That's to say, unless he slipped away without us seeing him. I'd be willing to wager my share of the drinks he's there yet."

"Then he likely is there? Send your eight men to seize the boat. They needn't be too gentle with Aristobolus, but they're not to kill him if they can help it. Let them throw him in the bottom of the boat and tie and gag him. They may as well take the provisions with them. You and your other two, follow me, and follow closely."

"Aye, aye, master. Are we to have Aristobolus' company in the boat all afternoon?"

"Yes, you may un-gag him when you're out on the lake. Use your own judgment about pretending to agree to any treachery he may suggest. Memorize his words—his exact words."

"Aye, aye master."

Eight men, trusted for the first time with a dangerous task without Conops' superintending eye, and looking innocent enough, in spite of armor, with their load of wine and provisions, tramped away eastward down the road between the buildings and the shore. Tros, with his sword beneath his left arm, hidden by an apparently carelessly draped *himation*, strolled westward, appearing to enjoy the freshness of the early afternoon breeze. Conops followed him. Jeshua and Aroun trudged at Conops' heels.

There was a considerable crowd along the road to eastward. Many of them were slaves, permitted a day's idleness on account of the festival; but there were scores of gaily dressed and well-behaved families, enjoying the view or hiring row-boats, or strolling from one public garden, or one wine-booth to another. And there was a considerable number of chariots being driven at the usual reckless speed by gallants not yet drunk enough to kill deliberately but with enough wine in their heads to enjoy scattering the crowd like scared poultry.

There was a disturbance of that kind as Tros drew abreast of the myrtle and oleander thicket. Two racing chariots swerved around the western corner of the thicket and headed eastward, giving Tros their dust and scattering a screaming score of men and women.

Conops snarled a warning. "They're on us! Draw, you chosen people!"

Tros' sword licked out like the flash of lightning. His *himation* danced on his left arm. Conops leaped. He plunged his knife into a man's throat. The Jews buried their swords in the bellies of two other men. Tros slew the fourth, driving the point through his heart with such force that Conops had to stand on the man's body in order to wrench the sword out.

It was all over in almost a second, like a flurry of wind in a copse, or the swoop of a hawk on a dove-cote. A few of the wine-garden's customers peered through the thicket, but no crowd

formed; on the contrary, those in the street who had seen what happened scurried out of sight to avoid trouble.

It was nothing very unusual that a man should be set upon by his enemy's freedmen; drunken brawls and unpaid debts, the volatile affections of a woman, or even a topical song was enough to start a street fight. The municipal slaves would remove the bodies, unless the dead men's friends first did it.

Meanwhile, fishermen hurried ashore to be first to steal clothing, and money, and finger-rings, on the pretext of laying the bodies beside the road; they even demanded pay for doing that from passers-by, because Alexandrines disliked to see blood on a glorious May afternoon.

They were not like Romans. They could always be persuaded to pay to protect their squeamishness. By the time Tros had cleaned his sword with sand and water, and Conops had wiped it dry, the incident was in a fair way to being forgotten.

Tros dismissed Conops and the two Jews as soon as they had cleaned their weapons.

"That gale's done with. Make haste now and get the boat off-shore. I'll be safe between here and the queen's barge."

"Aye, aye, master."

CHAPTER IV

"IT IS YOUR THRONE!"

THE approach to the royal boat wharf through the Gate of the Sun—a gate that no longer existed, because the wall had been demolished at that point to make room for imported trees—was almost the only Egyptian touch in the whole city, with its guardian sphynxes and statues stolen from ancient Nile-bank temples.

The marble boat-shed was of Egyptian design and even the attending slaves were garbed in the ancient Egyptian head-dress. It was a sort of symbolical gateway. Here one entered into Egypt. Today, Greece—Europe, ceased. Yesterday, mystery, melancholy and the fabled land of Khem began.

Even the boats on Mareotis were of the ancient Egyptian pattern. Many of the luxurious villas and pavilions on the islands were designed to suggest the Egyptian spirit, in curious contrast to the ultra-modern Greek design of Alexandria.

There were scores of sentries, to keep the holiday-making crowd at a respectful distance from the royal boat wharf. But nobody challenged Tros. He was not saluted, but he was not questioned. He enjoyed a sensation of being seen, and yet intentionally unseen, as if he were expected, even welcome, and yet unmentionable.

He decided to test the situation and approached a lieutenant of the guard, who yawned and peacocked on the terrace in front of the Egyptian arch at the landward end of the marble jetty.

"Promoted I see, Tysander. I congratulate you. Have I blood on my clothing?"

The officer examined him from head to foot.

"No. But I saw that little entertainment. Good sword!"

Six short weeks ago, Tysander would have called him by name, with simulated if not actual respect.

"I thank you, Tysander."

"Better leave your sword here."

"My man has it."

Tros threw back his *himation* in proof that he was unarmed. The lieutenant nodded and Tros strolled through the arch, not exactly expecting to be daggered on the far side but, in his mind's eye, measuring three jumps from the arch to the water. However, the slaves who stood with their backs to the arch-like statues took no notice of him.

The gilded barge lay moored against the jetty with its sixteen rowers in their places; they tossed oars as Tros strolled through the arch. There was no doubt they were waiting for him. The royal barge-commander stood on the jetty actually smiling, looking a bit Bacchanalian because his chaplet was awry, but spic and span in Cleopatra's new emerald-and-orange uniform. She had a great gift for designing uniforms that made a man look picturesque but subtly menial.

"Have you a dagger on you?" he asked. "May I feel?"

Again no mention of Tros' name. An air of almost, but not quite cordiality. The best seat on the barge, in the stern, behind the queen's awninged bridge-deck. No salute from the rowers, but, on the other hand, respectful service from the barge slaves, who blew the dust from Tros' sandals and sponged and wiped his legs.

No command. Every one knew what to do. The gaudily dressed sailors cast off and the barge went at top speed toward Pleasure Island, with the tubas blowing to make fishermen and holiday boating-parties scoot out of the way. No conversation, not even between the barge-commander and his lieutenant.

There was nothing to interfere with Tros' interest in the passing scene, and it was not long before he had picked out the gaily painted pleasure boat in which Conops and the ten Jews were pretending to be out for an afternoon's amusement.

Eight of the Jews were rowing, and like all strong men untrained to that difficult art they were making heavy weather of it; they could easily pass for a boat-load of drunken roisterers, perhaps in a stolen boat, but surely not armed and dangerous.

Pleasure Island loomed, took form, revealed itself in a reedy mirage, two or three miles beyond the staked deep-water channel for the laden barges from the Nile. It provided absolute privacy. Even its flower-carpeted banks were invisible until the barge had gone beyond it, and turned, and approached from the southward, the thump of the oars alarming myriads of water-fowl that took wing from the reeds and filled the air with weird music.

Then the first sight was of naked Greek girls, some bathing and others playing games against a background of marbled terraces and columned pavilions. There was not a man in sight, not even a eunuch, except for a guardboat half hidden in a water-lane between the reeds.

There were probably several guard-boats, but only one was visible. The attendants on the boat-jetty were Egyptian slave-girls, dog-eyed, bare-breasted. Their white teeth flashed in sensuous smiles. Their dark skins were like shadows against the sunlit marble.

They made the boat fast. No one spoke to Tros. As he walked up the marble path, between flowers, the sound of girls' laughter didn't cease for an instant. Even when the path skirted one end of the terrace on which the naked girls were playing, and he was in full view, no one stared at him. He knew at least half of those girls—knew their fathers and mothers; they were the cream of the Alexandrine aristocracy; he had been offered his pick of them, dozens of times, by a court chamberlain who would have been delighted to ally him by marriage with the ascendant political faction. But he might have been invisible for all the notice they took.

The first greeting he received, at the top of the steps, on the terrace in front of the pavilion door, was from the Lady Charmion, looking like one of the Fates with her needle and thread and her vinegary air of prim chastity in classically draped white Chinese silk. She looked up from her sewing to answer his bow.

"The queen expects you. You may go straight in. The child Caesarion has just

been punished for saying he loves you."

"Perhaps he does," Tros answered. "Was it you who had him punished?"

"Yes!" She almost spat the word. "Go in and try to redeem yourself! You will need the full resources of your Samothracian guile, I can assure you!"

"I will keep my guile," he answered, bowing like a courtier, "for gilding my esteem, where tart ingratitude occasionally chafes it thin!"

He loved to annoy her. Three ladies-in-waiting, who were doing embroidery-work with Charmion, and pretending to like it, giggled. Tros nodded to them and entered the pavilion, down a corridor where seven eunuchs sat on a gilded bench, whispering and smirking like priests in a vestry.

One of them opened a door, and then for the first time some one called Tros by name. The child Caesarion, a brat hardly able to toddle, but precocious, and looking already like a miniature copy of Julius Caesar, ran through the doorway and fell at his feet, seizing his legs and calling him "Twos of Samothwakee." There was at any rate someone pleased to see him.

But the child was swept up by a protesting nurse and borne off, yelling for his hero. Then a golden voice, that had no equal, anywhere:

"You may come in."

THE EUNUCH closed the door behind him and he was alone with the queen. She was in one of her strangely magnetic moods that nobody ever knew how to divine—greenish eyes, brooding—rather sensuous lips, smiling—looking smaller than ever, because she was seated in a huge chair facing the view through the open window.

Her exquisitely shapely feet, touched with henna, in gold-leafed sandals, rested on a footstool of carved ivory. On the table beside her were pen and ink and a number of parchment scrolls that fluttered in the slight breeze; and on a long table against the wall were a number of objects obviously rifled from an ancient tomb. In her hands was a golden bracelet.

Tros caught his breath. He bowed low, with his eyes on the bracelet. It was not Egyptian. It was not Greek, Indian, Chinese, Arabian, nor Persian. It was heavy, solid, hammered, and indented with an unfinished pattern that bore no resemblance to any known Egyptian design; barbaric, and yet masterfully conceived and done.

He had hard work to show no emotion when he had finished bowing and stood upright. It almost never paid to betray emotion in Cleopatra's presence; it was vastly safer to simulate emotion that one did not feel.

She appeared annoyed that he had seen the bracelet.

"Can you imagine," she asked, "a craftsman competent to do such skillful work, who would nevertheless be such a savage as to take a wrought gold vase from an ancient tomb, and smash it, and then desecrate it into such an ornament as this? Who could wear such a thing? It weighs two pounds."

Tros glanced at the priceless objects on the table—necklaces, vases, glassware, bracelets, a golden tablet a yard square covered with hieroglyphics.

"He might have smashed those, too," he answered.

He knew who had done it. There was only one man south of the Baltic who would even have thought of making such a bracelet as lay on Cleopatra's knee. She laid the bracelet aside.

"Well?" she asked after a moment. "Why don't you reproach me?"

"Royal Egypt, I reproach myself," he answered.

"For having failed me?"

"For having trusted you."

Her answering smile was dangerous. She fingered one of the scrolls on the

table beside her. It was a list of about a dozen names.

"These are dead," she remarked. She picked up another, shorter list. "These are, at the moment, dying. They betray one another like true Greeks at the first touch of torture. It is not that they are cowards, or I think not. Pain makes them angry. They resent that their accomplices should escape such torment. So they tell."

Tros almost shrugged his shoulders.

"It is your throne, Egypt! Keep it if you care to!"

"If I can!" She looked battle-angry.

Tros grinned then. It was the first confession he had ever heard from Cleopatra's lips that there might be an easier seat than a throne.

She resented his grin. Her mood changed to the snake-like anger that made her terrible. She spoke with the vibrance in her voice that aroused men's superstition—the voice that had made her name a byword—astonishing from such a small woman, not in the least loud, but vigorous with a sort of absoluteness.

"I sent for you," she said, "to receive from your lips an explanation of your conduct in Cyprus."

But she was threatening the wrong man, and she knew it. Her eyes changed even before Tros answered.

"You have a strange way, Royal Egypt, of inviting a friend to an audience! It would have been simpler to have written my name on that list, to explain to the executioner—or not to explain, as the case might be."

"Don't talk nonsense. I have a reason for seeing you secretly."

"Doubtless a royal reason! I would have spared you the intrusion, unless I also had reasons, Egypt. As for what I have done, at my own cost—"

"On your own responsibility! You refused my commission, remember!"

"It was the best I could do. I defeated and slew the pirate Anchises, and destroyed his entire fleet."

"Yes, and you sank two Roman biremes, in Salamis harbor, for which the Roman proconsul Cassius is blaming *me!*"

"To which your answer has been, to permit your minister to denounce me as a pirate!"

"That was necessary. It was a sop to his Roman indignation."

"As I already said, it is your throne," he retorted. "Having no throne, and not willing to have one, I have never found it necessary to denounce a loyal friend, for the sake of such a cur as Cassius, who stabbed his benefactor! If you choose between me and Cassius, as to which is your friend, I withdraw from the competition! Deadly though it may be, I prefer your enmity to the stench of being less than Cassius' enemy to the last breath he or I shall ever breathe!"

She laughed. "The same Tros! Friend? You? You speak to me as if I were your mistress, or a servant caught stealing the food from the table! Is my sister Arsinoe not my enemy? My treacherous, envious enemy? Didn't you befriend her in Cyprus? Do you call that being my friend?"

"What would you have had me do?"

"You should have drowned her! She was on your ship. She was present, in the sea-fight off Salamis—where I would give almost my eyes to have been! She was present in your cabin when you brow-beat that old Roman wolf Ahenobarbus. I would give almost my ears to have heard that! You gave her money. It was tribute money looted from the temple. You gave her men. They were pirates, whom you took prisoner, and Roman legionaries, for whom Ahenobarbus had no ship-room. You set her free from Serapion's clutches—Serapion, whom I appointed to be her viceroy because I knew he would hold her powerless, whatever treachery he might invent!"

"I perceive that your spy Etruscan Tarquinius has saved me the necessity of making a report," Tros answered.

"I have a letter from him. Written on the very day that you returned to Salamis after the sea-fight. It came in sections, by eighteen pigeons to the Syrian coast, and thence by runner."

"Surely you show great wisdom in taking that jackal's word against mine," Tros answered. "Did he write it to you, or to Charmion?"

She ignored the question. Suddenly, in a voice that suggested an archer's tautened bow-string, she loosed her secret news:

"My dear sister Arsinoe is gone from Cyprus!"

Tros stared at her, trying to read her eyes, but he could only judge that she was studying him as alertly as he was studying her. If she was telling the truth, he was in as deadly danger as he ever had been in, in the whole of his dangerous life. Did she suspect him of conspiracy? He did the opposite of what any other man in Egypt would have dared to do. He told her the truth:

"I had been in Alexandria not three hours, Egpyt, before several men, of whom one was your spy—I knew him—told me that tale. Your spy—he spoke with me near the municipal building—said she is in Egpyt. I wouldn't have believed that rogue if he had told me the day of the week! He invited me to go to her, to command her army. Did he tell you my answer?"

She smiled. "He said you spoke with Aristobolus, and with two others. The two others are in custody. Where is Aristobolus?"

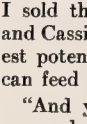
Tros grinned. "I can answer for four of his freedmen. They attacked me, lest I should betray Aristobolus."

"Bloodshed again—in the city? I am told you have freed some slaves, that they may bear arms. Are you planning to send them broiling in the Royal Arena, as did your Northmen?"

He was glad to change the subject.

"I came here," he answered, "to claim my Northmen. Of your magnaminity, release them. The only crime they committed was to break the heads of some Romans for speaking about you loosely."

"Do you remember my terms?" she retorted. "You may have them when you have kept your own promise."



"I HAVE kept it, Egpyt. Your war-fleet captains had abandoned the corn fleet to its fate. I found it and protected it from Romans and from pirates also. I sold the corn to Brutus, because he and Cassius are at the moment the greatest potential danger to you unless they can feed their armies."

"And you have loosed against me a more dangerous, a more treacherous enemy than any Roman! Arsinoe, I tell you, is in Egypt! Do you call that doing me a service? Well for you, Lord Tros, that I mistrust Tarquinius! He has written a letter to you, in care of the Jew Esias, to await your coming; and it fell into my hands, as I don't doubt he intended it should.

"He informs you, in that letter, that the Princess Arsinoe, acting on your advice, mind you, has taken those pirates that you gave her, and some men that my loving cousin Herod offered, and some of the Gaulish legionaires that Ahenobarbus left behind in Cyprus, and has crossed to Syria.

"At the time of writing, she expected Cassius to help her to reach Egypt, because Cassius would prefer a queen on the throne of Egpyt who is more subservient to Roman arrogance."

"I should have slain that rat Tarquinius when you put him aboard my ship to spy on me," Tros answered. "You know him as well as I do. And he knows me as well as you do. I will wager that he wrote that letter to persuade you to mistrust both me and Esias, who are the two men in Egypt who can't be

bribed to betray you. May I see the letter?"

"Yes. No—no, I haven't it here." She studied him for at least a minute. Then, suddenly: "You are a sentimentalist. Could you be coaxed to betray me?"

"I have been coaxed with hard blows and soft speech, Egypt. But here I am."

"I am sending you to deal with Arsinoe."

"Me?"

"You—secretly—finally—once and for all! She has several hundred men. She moves on Memphis, the ancient capital, where she expects to be able to raise an army. But I have my grip on Memphis. I hold hostages; I have the sons and daughters of most of the important men of Memphis who might otherwise go to her aid. She has raided the quarterly caravan from the emerald mines, and she is robbing the tomb-robbers, for gold with which to lavish bribes. I have caught the ring-leaders in Alexandria, but all the Romans in the city, and many others would take her part if she should begin to succeed. She must be dealt with swiftly."

"I am useless without my Northmen!"

"You? Useless?"

Will against will. It was almost like a physical clash of weapons.

"Royal Egypt, you are too fond of clipping the wings of the hawk that shall fly your errands! You obliged me to go to sea without my Northmen. I fought a battle that I came near losing for lack of their good fighting arms!"

"A few barbarians—a mere handful of brutes with battle-axes?"

"Thirty-eight comrades in arms! Thirty-eight veterans! Egypt, have *you* their equal?"

She eyed him darkly, resting her chin on her hand. "It is not soldiers or sailors, but generals that I need," she said after a moment. "I can supply you with plenty of men."

"Aye," he answered, "But you haven't one commander whom you dare to trust out of reach of the executioner! So you propose to flatter me by—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "I fear I flatter you. But there is no one else I can trust at the moment. I want her killed, not captured. Tros, incredible though this may sound to you, I love Arsinoe. I saved her from execution after Caesar's triumph when she should have been slain in the Tullianum, if the Roman mob had had its way. It was I who had to beg Caesar to make her Queen of Cyprus. But the girl is my ceaseless enemy. There is nothing to do but to kill her."

"Therefore you degrade me to the rank of butcher?"

"I wish her to be killed—not shamed—not put to torture—not cruelly ill-used, as she would ill-use me if she could seize my throne. She must die. And you, of all men, understand that."

It was useless to fence with Cleopatra when she talked in that vein. She lied, and Tros knew it. She neither loved nor pitied Arsinoe, although it was no doubt true that she would take no delight in Arsinoe's shame or torture. She merely wanted her killed, and to avoid the blame for having killed her.

"Pitying the girl," said Tros, "in the fight off Salamis I gave her a chance to die as you or I would choose to if the world should have no honorable room for you or me. But she fought too well, in one of my men's armor. She came out unscathed, with her dagger dripping and a laugh on her lips."

"Tros—I believe you love her!"

"Egypt, I love man or woman who is brave."

"It is more than rumored that she loves you!"

"So. Am I indictable by rumor?"

"If you love her—if she loves you—need I explain that loving-kindness should grant her a swift death, rather than the ignominy of, for instance, such a punishment as your elder sister, Berenice underwent? It is as an act of mercy, that I send you."

"Have you mercy for my Northmen?"

"I depend on your love for your Northmen to outweigh any emotions that a girl might arouse, who is nothing if not capable of seducing such a sentimentalist as you are!"

Tros strode to the window, turned away from her, turned again and strode back. He was thinking of the two-pound hammered bracelet.

"Egypt—"

"Think!" she warned him. She could see the wrath on his face, and the deadlier integrity behind it — the iron resolution.

"I have done my thinking, Egypt. I am no queen's catspaw."

She had her hand on the padded hammer of a golden gong shaped like a lion's face.

"You refuse?"

The threat of death had never made Tros less than obstinate—but craftily obstinate, lightning quick to guess the weakness that lingered on threat instead of striking first in order to compel. Not for one fraction of a moment did he forget his duty to his Northmen. As long as they lived, he would do his best to be their dependable lord captain.

"Aye. I will not go unless on my own terms."

"Name them."

"My own discretion! If you trust me to go, you shall trust me to do as I see fit."

"Oh well," she answered. "Indiscretion would be bad for your Northmen. You appreciate that?"

He nodded. She had laid that heavy bracelet on the table. He glanced at it, then looked straight into her eyes.

"And I demand Cleopatra's promise. Not Royal Egypt's but the promise of the Cleopatra whom I snatched away from Rome before Caesar's murderers could plunge their knives into you also—do you understand what I mean? I have been your good friend, Egypt."

There was no warm emotion expressed in her eyes. She looked even slightly contemptuous of his claim on her gratitude. But she seemed to be reappraising him, perhaps wondering whether to tell him more, and to trust him less; because the more a man knows, the less easy he is to compel. And as yet she was only learning statecraft. She had not yet reached the ripeness of judgment that, a few years later, almost made her mistress of the world.

"How can I make any other that what you are pleased to call a royal promise?" she asked after a moment's pause. "We were friends, you and I, when I was a homeless exile. True. But who serves whom for nothing? Has a queen friends? What request can Cleopatra grant, that Egypt may not forbid? It must be something strange—something new in the way of demands on a reigning queen!"

"Not new in your ears, Egypt! If I go to Memphis—if I solve this riddle for you—if I quell rebellion before it rocks your throne—thereafter will you set my Northmen free, and rather than hinder will you aid me to set forth on my voyage?"

She smiled. "Around the world? You will desert me for that chimera? Very well then. You have Egypt's promise that she shall not interfere with Cleopatra's farewell! How will you find Arsinoe? What guides—what forces will you need? This is secret, remember."

"I have my own means and my own men."

She stared. His quickness of decision never failed to bring that frown to her forehead.

"How will you explain my absence from the city?" he demanded.

"They shall say you have been sent into exile."

"Memphis? There will be a north wind. I can swoop on Memphis. I will be off before daybreak, Egypt, with my own men. Tell me what you know of Arsinoe's movements."

"I will summon Alexis. He has all the information. He is to go with you."

Tros scowled. He hated her cynical courtier friend Alexis, a man who had not been long enough at court to pay his debts.

THERE were two gongs near her. She struck one that clanged like the clash of cymbals. Instantly the curtains on the rear wall parted. It was the wrong gong. Two huge Nubians rushed in, cloaked with leopard-skin, armed with brass scimitars. Trained to be swift to protect their royal mistress, they rushed Tros, one from either side, too swiftly for Cleopatra to stop them.

They never even saw her raised hand. Her voice froze in her throat as a scimitar slit the air. It missed—went spinning—struck the other negro's neck and embedded itself in the door panel. Tros' fist, quicker than the weapon, had clubbed his assailant's arm—struck it numb.

His right foot tripped the man; his left fist sent him staggering into the other Nubian, and they fell in a mess of blood at Cleopatra's feet. She looked angry, contemptuous, disgusted, but not afraid for a moment. Tros pitched both men through the open window.

Then he picked up a Damascus mat, covered the blood with it, strode to the door, pulled the scimitar out from the panel and tossed that, too, through the window.

"If I am under arrest," he said, "no more than your word is needed."

She laughed, looking suddenly pleased. "It was a mistake!"

"Are they sufficiently rebuked?"

"I am! What an expensive guest you are, Lord Captain Tros! Those slaves cost me more than the rug you have used for a mop! I bought that rug in Rome from the spoils of Mithridates' palace. Now the Nubians are useless. You may have them. You may have the rug, too."

She struck the other gong, and then walked to the window with Tros while a eunuch brought in slaves to clean the tiled floor. The rug was rolled and tossed through the window to the Nubians, one of whom was bandaging his neck with a rag from his chiton. The other lay stunned on the terrace. At a gesture from the queen the wounded man unrolled the rug, hove the stunned man on to it and dragged him out of sight.

Cleopatra's mood had changed as utterly as a landscape changes when the clouds let through the sun. She laid her hand on Tros' arm.

"You, who are fitter to be a king than any warrior on earth—for you have brains as well as courage—is Egypt too little?"

She was almost, not quite, tall enough for the crown of her head to reach his shoulder. Not answering, he stared through the window, southward, toward the fabled land of Khem.

"Do you seek new conquests? You, who hate Rome as I hate Rome, and as Rome hates me—there is Syria to conquer—Parthia—India. Egypt or Rome will prevail in the end. But who shall lead the battleline of Egypt? Southward—forever southward, beyond the desert, aye, and beyond the mountains where they say the Nile begins—there are realms beyond realms awaiting conquest. Does your imagination feel no challenge?"

At last he looked down at her.

"Aye," he answered. "In this pavilion you and Caesar used to speak of it. I have sat here listening."

"You are younger, stronger, healthier than Caesar was. And you are not, like Caesar, ham-strung by grudging loyalty to a Roman wife and Roman prejudices."

"No," he answered. "I have other prejudices."

"And no wife."

"No. Nor a master! I am my own man."

"Gyved by sentiment to two-score

bawdy battle axe-men, whose hearts are in the brothels and their brains in the lees of a jar of Cretan wine!"

"They are my men. They are comrades-in-arms. I have led them. They and I have fought a main or two with death together. I will do your errand, Egypt."

"You are also a greater fool than Caesar knew how to be!" she answered. "Oh, that Caesar had had your strength, to shake off his assassins!"

"Do you mean oh, that I had Caesar's ambition?"

"Yes, I mean it! Would you like to be King of Syria?"

"Syria is not yours, Egypt."

"Not yet! But would you like to be King of Syria?"

"No—nor king of anywhere."

"Go! You bore me. I will send you Alexis. He shall meet you at the barge. You know him?"

"Yes. I know him."

"Mind—you are to trust him."

"May I trust you, to keep your promise?"

"Keep your own promise. You will not need to remind me of mine."

CHAPTER V

"ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL BE A VALUABLE MAN"

SUNSET was bathing the roofs of Alexandria, and the evening mist was rising on Mareotis, when the royal barge left Pleasure Island. Alexis, a very handsome fellow, with a comically aristocratic Alexandrine manner of taking nothing seriously, snuggled himself in a woolen *himation* and kissed a parchment order on "any or all district treasurers." It bore Cleopatra's signature and seal.

"No limit!" he remarked. "I bless my father and my mother, who conceived me as full of cupidity as a Rhakotis prostitute! There are compensations, even for having to leave Alexandria. Dreadful ordeal, but sublime opportunity! When I return I will buy me Arabian horses. Hitherto, mine has never been better than second chariot. It is simply a question of money. Buy the best horses. Bribe the other fellows' charioteers. Watch me win next time!"

"Better rob tombs like the queen," Tros answered. "The queen keeps her eye on the treasury statements."

"On the tombs, too," said Alexis. "Mining is a royal monopoly. She calls tombs mining! Did you notice that stuff on the table?"

"Where is it from?"

"Near the Great Pyramid."

Tros grinned, thinking of his Northmen.

"Tros, you're a very remarkable man. I have you to thank for this treasury order! If it weren't for you, she would have sent two generals, each to keep an eye on the other. They would have been much more expensive than you and me. I would give ten per cent of my probable peculations to know what you said to the queen."

"You buy things twice over, do you?" Tros answered. "You heard every word of what I said to her."

"Well, since you have guessed so accurately, I admit it. I was behind the curtain. I saw you smash those Nubians. Gods! Look at them! I don't know yet whether she meant them to kill you, or not, and I'll bet they don't know, either. Perhaps she doesn't know. I think she left it to destiny, the way you or I would toss a coin or bet a fortune on a cock-fight. She is like that—superstitious. What will you do with the Nubians?"

"Oar-bank. I never yet knew a royal slave worth a drachma until he had learned what work is. They shall blister their hams and work the fat off. That duffer let go his scimitar at a mere touch."

"A pretty skilful touch, Tros!"

"But a touch. He shall learn what it means to hang on to an oar, with the wind across the current and the ship rolling. It needs more than muscle. Will you take them to Esias for me and bid him keep them at heavy labor until I return from this business? Them and the rug. That is my rug, remember! I believe you will find Esias in his office at the east end of the city. You will find me near my trireme."

"I am supposed to keep you in sight."

"Can you swim? Very well. Go ashore in the barge and find Esias. Bring him to me. I am to trust you, she said. So I will, until you give me reason not to. Let us understand each other."

"Oh, I understand you."

"Let me know when you don't. On any successful expedition there is only one commander. There is only one way of returning home alive and not disgraced. That is by obeying the commander. I am he."

Alexis got up and bowed as impudently as he dared.

"I salute you. Should I call you Caesar?"

"You may call me friend if you will. I will judge you, by behavior."

Tros went forward and, pushing aside the lookout man, stood for several minutes with his hand on the high, carved, gilded stem. Suddenly he plunged overboard and was out of sight in a moment, lost to view in the mist that curled amid the rushes. He swam, as many strong men do, with prodigious waste of effort and it was several minutes before his hand caught the rail of a painted pleasure-boat and Conops hauled him overside.

"Master, let me rub you dry with my shirt. This chill air—"

"Give me food, you idiot! Do you think I can go since daybreak on an empty belly and wait to be bath-housed by a drunkard? Is there wine left?"

"Aye, aye, master. I saved some from the Jews' share. I said to the Jews, I said it 'd need an artful eunuch, I said, to poison the lord captain. But if he comes to you parched from mistrusting palace wine, would you have him drink up Mareotis? Frogs and all, eh? Frogs, I said to 'em, said I, are against religion. Aren't you Jews circumcised, I said, against the sin of eating frogs? So, shall he drink 'em? Here you are, master, good wine! Wine of Chios! Kept it cool, too. Here you are. Bread, cheese, olives—"

"Where is Aristobolus?"

One of the Jews removed a disordered sail. Aristobolus lay bound and gagged, under the thwarts. Tros ate ravenously.

"Head for the cross-city canal. Row slowly. Enter the canal in darkness. Has Aristobolus talked?"

"Aye, master. As soon as we'd ungagged him and he'd wetted his throat with some of our Chian, he began talking a streak. Never heard such wild talk as his, not even from our Northmen when they're drunk and homesick for the Baltic women. Any word of our Northmen, master?"

"Aye. When we get back, sort out all their battle-axes and armor from the store-room. Wrap them in a sail and have them ready."

"Trust you to make a landfall, fog or night-time!"

"Carry on with your tale."

"Master, maybe one of our lads hit him a bit hefty. He talked wild. Soon as he saw it was me, and me your man, and us all laughing and acting foolish, and out o' reach o' land and all that, first he offered us money. So we took what he had, and it was little enough for a gentleman of his fine speech and manners. Then we fed him but he didn't eat much; and I told him he's your prisoner, and you not in the habit o' treating prisoners the way a pirate treats 'em—pirate though he said you are. He loosed off a fathom o' talk about your being a pirate, and the queen intending to have you crucified, because the Romans want

it. And he said that if we love you, we should find you quick and let him tell you how to keep your soul inside your body."

"You remember his exact words?"

"No, master. They were too many. Twenty men couldn't remember 'em. But he talked, like a hawse paying out in a tide-rip, how we'd better find you in a hurry. So I said you're having your fun with a girl and it was worth a broken bone or two to interrupt you without reason why—"

"You loose-tongued lecher!"

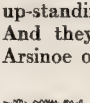
"And I told him I lost my starboard eye, crack-peeping, to witness your secret interviews with kings and queens. I'm all that in your confidence. These lads confirmed it; they'll make good sailors, time I've schooled 'em. One way and another, and what with threatening to drown him if he didn't, he talked. Chronos! He talked of Herod of Jerusalem, and this queen's father, and a lady by name of Boidion, and half the history of Egypt.

"Seems that this queen's father was a bit of what you're fond of calling me. And he'd a gift for getting daughters, had King Ptolemy the Piper. Nearly all his get were daughters. The boys were sickly, but the girls were well loined, and good lookers, and any number of 'em. One she-child—one of his bastards—was by a Jewess, name of Esther I think he said, and they called the child Boidion.

"That particular she-child is the spitting image, so said this man when he'd had his second cup of Chian, of that Princess Arsinoe who got us into all that trouble off Salamis—born within the same month, and so like her, said he, it was awkward.

"But instead of poisoning her along with her mother, as would have been more usual, somebody whose job it was to clean up King Ptolemy's leavings reported 'em dead and packed 'em off to Jerusalem, where the mother's folks lived, and our lads here claim they knew the mother in Jerusalem.

"They swear she was a high-priest's daughter. I've schooled 'em with a rope's end so they don't lie to me worth mentioning. They claim they knew Boidion, too. They say she grew up to be a fine up-standing wench with saucy manners. And they agree she looks like Queen Arsinoe of Cyprus."



THE ten Jews nodded, one by one, solemnly, resting on their oars as Tros looked at them for confirmation of the story.

"Well," said Conops, "this here Aristobolus said, if I understood him right, that that swine of an Etruscan Tarquinius—only he called him a smart fellow—who was left in Cyprus in command of Queen Arsinoe's body-guard, has killed Arsinoe—dagger, poison, bowstring, drowned, he didn't say what—and crossed to Syria, and gone to Jerusalem, and found Boidion, and called her Arsinoe, and brought her to Egypt, and raised an army, and intends to march on Alexandria and make her Queen of Egypt.

"I made him say it over and over, and I got it right. That's his story. And he said that the thing for you to do is to join Boidion—he said near Memphis—because, said he, for two reasons. First, Queen Cleopatra has your name on her list of suspects for the torturer to examine. Second, knowing this Boidion isn't Arsinoe, soon as you've helped to make her queen you'll have the pick of whatever's going, and if you're so minded you can even marry her and make yourself viceroy, or you'll tell what you know. There, master, he said plenty more, but that's all I remember."

"Why did you gag him again?"

"I had to take the sail off him, master. If I'd let him go on talking he'd have had me that mixed up I'd never have remembered half of what I do remember. And besides, there were two boats full

o' queen's men, and I saw them search a boat or two, and they might have searched us. So I readied him up. We lashed the iron killick to his feet. We'd have dumped him if the queen's men came close. No knowing what might have happened if they'd found him aboard of us, and us your men, in a boat that we'd have had to do some full gale lying to explain."

"One of these days," said Tros, "you'll be a valuable man."

That was high praise. Conops pondered it in silence, and Tros sat thinking until mist and darkness blended and suddenly the guard at the mouth of the cross-city canal challenged gruffly. Tros answered:

"Junior Court Chamberlain Alexis' boat, on the Queen's business."

Some one stuck a torch into a fire-pot and whirled it until five guards stood revealed with the crimson firelight gleaming on polished armor.

"Junior Court Chamberlain Alexis came ashore in the queen's barge. Who are you?"

"Ask him! Who tells the queen's business to the first fool who asks?"

"Come closer! Row in here to the wharf!"

"At your own risk! Halt me at your peril! I've a prisoner for the dungeon."

"Oh. Well—he'll have company! They've been packing them in! Pass!"

CHAPTER VI

THE FLY-BY-NIGHT FLOTILLA

NIGHTMARE. The slums of Rhakotis by crimson torchlight. The great trireme, high on the ways, with her gilded serpent, draped in paulin, thrust between the roofs of storage sheds. There were men beneath her, examining the torn tin sheathing by the light of tow flares. A stream of Esias' slaves, under the watchful eyes of two of Esias' partners, carrying ashore the gear, ammunition and dunnage and Tros' personnel possessions, to be locked out of reach of longshore thieves. Old Esias, with his hand on the master-shipwright's shoulder, listening to Tros and nodding as he watched the secretary-slave jot down instructions.

"Strip off all the tin, Esias. Test every nail in the hull. They're mostly oak tree-nails, and tight, but some of them may have been shorn from the shock of collision; we hit those pirate hulls with our sails full o' wind and a big sea running; we have had to work double-shifts at the water-hoist, all the way from Tarsus. Have your shipwright test every inch of her timbers. If there's anything soft, out with it; anything cracked, out with it. Replace with Lebanon cedar. There's a lot of that tin too badly torn to be put back; have it melted down, and rebeaten. Watch it, though; it's worth nearly its weight in silver.

"Now then: I'll be taking a hundred men. The remainder I'll leave in your charge. Dribble out their back pay miserly. The half they've had already will be gone by morning. Dole out the balance fast enough to keep them from thieving themselves into trouble, but slowly enough to keep them standing by."

"Lord Captain, I have the queen's minister's order not to repair your trireme," said Esias. "I am already in trouble for having done your business. Selling your pearls to the queen for such a high price has aroused the anger of the treasury. They—he—"

"So you told me already. Did he order you not to make ready to repair, at full speed, when you get the word? Do as I say, Esias!"

"I will risk that. There was no order not to make ready. But a hundred—of your men—before morning? Even your lieutenant Ahiram carouses himself stupid.

"Ahiram shall stand by the ship," Tros answered. "He is useless on land.

Now listen: my prisoner Aristobolus is in your rope-shed, under a guard of your freedmen. Hold him there until I come for him, but drop a word in his ear that I am perhaps more friendly to him than I seem. I need eight more boats—good ones, not too heavy. Set a cask in each boat, full of good drinking water. I need wine and provisions for one hundred and twenty men for ten days—sails and gear for each boat—tow-line—plenty of spare rope—blankets—the fools are afraid to sleep without their heads covered—fire-pots—throw in a bolt or two of bandage-linen, there'll be broken heads to mend—enough cut firewood for a few days' cooking—better put your slaves to work on that this minute—one hundred and fourteen horse-tail fly-switches—I want men fit to fight, not blown meat—and an open letter of credit from you to all your agents up the Nile."

"And all this before morning, Lord captain?"

"Before midnight, Esias!"

"Impossible!"

"Esias, did I save your corn from the pirates? Did I sell it to the Romans for its full value? That, too, was impossible. But have you had your money for the corn?"

"Lord Tros—"

"May God guide your efforts, Esias!"

"Lord Tros—a moment!"

Esias, a bit feeble with age and shaken by excitement, took his arm and walked beside him.

"This way! This way!"

He led into the deepest shadow between piles of ship's stores.

"Take this! It came from Pelusium. Nay, I know not how my agent got it. There were two letters, one from Tarquinius, so openly delivered that the queen's spies could not help but know about it; they came and took it; and this one, that my agent sent stitched in a saddle-girth. See—the seal is unbroken."

"Do you know from whom it is?"

"Nay, nay. I guess. I do not wish to know. Tell none that I gave it to you."

Esias hesitated.

"And?" Tros asked him. "There was speech on your lips, Esias."

"Beware of the Lord Alexis!"

"Aye, I will well beware of him."

Esias hurried away. Tros climbed the ship's side and entered his cabin that had already been stripped of nearly all its contents. The whale-oil lamp still burned. By its light he examined the letter. It was of folded parchment, soiled with horse-sweat, addressed in fine Greek characters to Tros of Samothrace. He felt a curious excitement. He smelt and felt the letter half a dozen times before he broke the wax, sealed with a thumb-print, and read it. It was written in Greek, in the same fine, educated hand.

"Should you hear of my being in Egypt, doubt not. Should you hear of my dying in Egypt, doubt that, unless they say I died in armor. You will know whose armor. I am altogether weary of being a stake on the board in a game played by fools and swindlers. But again they throw the loaded dice. So it is I who must fight for myself, since there is none other for whom the fight is worth the effort, you not having deigned to—"

Several words had been crossed out. Horse-sweat had made the correction illegible.

"—So, if I am to die now, farewell and forget me. But if I live, you shall judge again."

There was no signature. But there could be no possible doubt in Tros' mind of the writer's name. Arsinoe had not returned the armor that she wore in the sea-fight off Salamis. Her reference to the armor was identification enough.

Tros swore. He set his teeth. He burned the letter in the flame of the whale-oil lamp and trod the ashes of the parchment into powder. Two revolutions? Arsinoe in Egypt? Boidion in Egypt? As like as twins—as desperate as hunted felons—as determined as the

Queen herself to possess the throne, and as careless of others' danger! There was no time now to think about it. More important at the moment were the Northmen's battle-axes and their armor; he went and watched them wrapped up, ready. And then action.

He marched away into the night, in armor because dark Rhakotis was as full of daggers as mongrel dogs. His ten-Jew bodyguard trudged at his back. Conops strode beside him, wise in all the by-ways, familiar with every bawdy-house and tavern from wharf-side to city wall, and from the wall to the slums beyond it, amid the slaughter-yards, slave-barracks, native Egyptian mud-brick huts and factories, along the road to the Necropolis.

First, they entered a tavern called the House of Carousal, that twanged with zither-music and swished with the exciting hiss of shaken sistra, in a reek of wine-fumes. Brown, black, white, ivory-hued bodies wove in and out in the reddened smoke of unglazed lamps and torches set in sconces on painted walls. Bare feet thumped on the tiled floor. Song—it was a sentimental, stupid, new-fangled chorus about the blue-eyed girls of Gaul—shrilled from the throats of wenches who sat on the customers' knees and kept them plied with wine.

It was a deep-sea sailor's heaven, rigidly exclusive; no one of less than quarter-deck rank might enter and be robbed in that place. The proprietor and four half-naked bullies hurried to the door to protest against the presence of the Jews, who were obviously of inferior rank, and moreover armed, which was against law and custom.

Conops hit one of the bullies on his spare-rib with the hilt of his knife—sent him spinning—howling—doubled with pain. There was an instant uproar. The musicians tried to out-din the tumult.

Tros spied Ahiram. The Phoenician, in gold ear-rings, with a silken scarf tied on his head and a girl on each knee, looked frightened. He moved like a man in a dream. But he showed his teeth when Tros shook off a dozen dancing-girls who tried to cling to his arms, and to pull off his armor and persuade him to stay and be entertained. Tros came and stood in front of him. Ahiram forgot his manners:

"Teeth of a yellow cur! Am I your watch-dog—day in, day out—a-sea and ashore? Did I come alive out of gale and battle to be robbed of a bit of wenching?"

"You have until midnight, Ahiram, to go and stand by the ship. If Esias reports you absent at midnight, I will order him to pay you off."

Ahiram came to his senses, a bit gradually. He pushed the women off his knees.

"What's in the wind, Lord Captain?"

"Treason! If they fire the trireme in my absence, I will blame you, Ahiram!"

"You are going somewhere?"

"Aye. Which are you—lieutenant or louse? Do I leave a man behind me?"

"Aye, aye, Lord Captain."

GRUMBLING, Ahiram began there and then the tedious business of disputing the amount of his bill; two or three hours' carousing would only have made the return to duty all the harder to face, so he smote the protesting wenches. Tros left him arguing how much he owed. He flung a coin to the proprietor, who cursed him as he went out.

The next place was a stews where lesser notables foregathered; decurions, stewards, master-archers, helmsmen, boatswains, armorers, ship-carpenters and oar-bank overseers could count on revelry uncriticized by the lords of the quarterdeck. The prices were slightly lower, the pace was faster for that reason. The wine stank worse; the musicians were fewer and made more noise; the women were older, less comely and more

artless, except for a big black Galla woman, who was doing a dance in mid-room.

She recognized Conops, instantly ceased dancing, shouted like an Amazon and rushed straight at him. He sent her sprawling, and she lay beneath a service table screaming that he owed her money.

But Tros had come there for decurions. He set his ten Jews at the door and stared through the lamp-smoke, conning faces, selecting the men who had stood best to their battle stations, and whose squads had shown best discipline in filthy weather against almost overwhelming odds. Some of the best men were already too drunk to bother with, and some were sufficiently drunk to be dangerous. But one man came and asked what it was the lord captain needed.

"You!" Tros answered. "You and Conops go and roust out these nine." He named the nine he had selected. "Line them in front of me."

It took priceless time. They had to be wrenched away from screaming harpies, who were egged on by the owner of the place to drag their customers by force into a labyrinth of cells out of sight in the rear of the building.

But there were presently ten dishevelled revelers standing bewildered in mid-room and even the proprietor ceased his protests as Tros looked them over. The music ceased.

"Are you men loyal?"

"Aye, aye, Lord Captain."

They were hiccoughing. Some of them swayed, and one was bleeding from a torn ear where a woman had tried to wrench him loose from Conops' grip.

"Are you seeking a new captain?"

"No!" They were clear on that point.

"Are you men or monkeys? Are you comrades in arms? Or are you toss-pots fit for nothing?"

"Men, Lord Captain!" They were indignant. They had earned that title. "Blood and bread! You know us! But—"

"You 'but' me? Those of you who love your comfort more than duty, fall out! Fall out, I say! The remainder—those of you who like the right to call me captain—"

Conops gave tongue. He could bark like the crack of breaking timbers:

"'Ten-shun! Right turn! Quick march! Left! Left! Left! Left wheel! To the street now. Try to march like fighting men, you dock-side drunkards! Fall in, my squad! Snap to it! Two deep! Guard our backs! You Jews haven't had your pay yet. I can trust you. Left, there! Left! Left! Cloak, eh? Leave it! Buy yourself another with the loot of Egypt!"

The proprietor stormed, cursed, tore his hair, threw his garland at Tros and cited the law. He threatened to summon the city guards and have Tros punished for infraction of privilege; no one in Alexandria, except the queen's police, had the right to interfere with any one's pleasures provided he paid his score, and even the police were on the side of the keepers of stews. But Tros was at war with time; each squandered minute was a notch in the score against him.

"Take your bill to Esias! If it's fair, I will bid him pay it!"

He strode out, filling his lungs with cleaner air, halted his men in the street, formed them in solid squad and gave his orders:

"Each of you decurions is to pick ten men from your own squad or another decurion's, no matter which, but strong and willing, fit to pull on an oar, march and fight with sword or bow and arrow. There'll be rough work, now and later, but double pay for all hands on this expedition. There's no time to go and get your weapons, but you'll each have one armed man to protect you, so let me see you wade in and line up a hundred men in short order. Help yourselves to clubs if you can find them—break some furniture—don't be afraid to break the heads of the brothel bullies."

"Expedition, Lord Captain? We'll need—"

"Forward, by the right, quick march!"

He led them, sobering up in the night air, through the torch-lit dimness of the shadowy Rhakotis slums, to the Western Gate, where the Queen's guards made no difficulty. The gate was not closed; Alexandria was an open port of refuge, day or night, for almost any one—even for runaway slaves who were willing to sell themselves to new masters or to enlist in the riffraff army. That was one of the thousand excuses that Rome had for picking a quarrel.

Tros in armor, with a squad of twenty behind him, looked too much like a queen's man to be questioned, even if he was not recognized, which he possibly was, he was not sure. Alexis was somewhere, spreading rumors, giving secret orders. There was no guessing what Alexis had said or done since he went and fetched Esias.

Tros marched through the gate and said nothing, saluted no one, was saluted by none. The gate clanged at his back but recoiled ajar and the cumbrous beam used as a lock was left leaning against the wall.

Then a raid. Such a raid as Alexandria had seen a thousand times, when crews were needed for the royal ships, or porters for the army's baggage loads, on the road to Pelusium. Swift, drastic, unexplained, merciless—knives in the dark, like hornets' stings—a panic-savage raided mud-nest—torch-lit riot—smashed doors—drunken seamen hauled out of stinking dives and clubbed into dazed obedience—roared at, deep-sea fashion—their anger, adroitly exploited, turned against the brothel-keepers—against yelping hags—against slaughter-house butchers and riffraff Roman destitutes who ran to the brothel-proprietors' aid—until they roared at last, half-consciously, their old familiar war-cry:

"Tros! Tros!"

Oarsmen — archers — swordsmen — spearmen—bruised and bleeding, but beginning to be conscious of the deep-sea brotherhood that owned them in one discipline—unarmed, but beginning to feel again like fighting men—were hurled, kicked, clubbed, driven into the street, where Tros stood with his armor crimsoned by a torch that Conops had snatched from some one. And then, suddenly, Tros' battle-voice:

"Stand by for trouble! Fall in, all hands! Line up! Four deep! Line along the road, there! Fall in!"

Conops, barking, nagging, prodding. Ten Jews, armed, and freed that day as a reward for discipline and valor, standing off the snarling dog-fight rushes of dealers in human depravity. Conops, brass-lunged:

"One hundred, one score and eleven, fit to stand up, master."

Tros, bull-lunged:

"Ship's company! Fours—right! By the right, quick march!"

Staggering, reeling, cursing fours; the Jews in the rear to deal with stragglers; the decurions, full of their lawful pride now, bullying the dragooning; Conops everywhere, up and down the line:

"Left! Left! Zeus and Leda! Can't a seaman take a drink or two and march? Pick that man up! Carry him! Left! Left! Your lord captain's showing you his wake, you lubbers! Step lively! Left! Left! Your head hurts, does it? Wait till morning and you'll know what pain is! Left! Left!"

And then, suddenly, song—one voice, hoarse and drunken—two—ten—twenty—then the whole line roaring, out of tune but in time to the steadier thud of feet, the indecorous, boisterous song about how the seamen taught directness to the lord of gods and men—salty seamen, loving Leda, 'longshore Leda.

Western Gate flung wide to admit the procession—no questions asked, but a glimpse of Alexis, junior court chamberlain, in conversation with the captain of the gate guard. Riotous streets. There

was always a riot in Rhakotis, day or night, when anything dynamic happened.

Curious, excited, credulous of any rumor, torch-lit streams of men and women flowed down the shadowy streets to Esias' wharf and fought there for the right to be next to the palings—blocked the way and fought the gangs of slaves and sailors who carried the loads to the boats at the canal wharf—yelled questions—lied—and at last jeered Tros, because somebody said he was under arrest and being sent by the queen into Southern Egypt, or perhaps to Berenice on the Red Sea.

A fierce last word with Conops—and away, two hours after midnight.

Conops' golden trumpet blew the "cast off" and the oars shoved the boats into mid-canal. Then Tros' voice, over-roaring all the tumult of the dinning crowd:

"Flotilla—in line ahead—ready! Dip!"

Silent, except for the thump of oars, the boats stole southward, threading a torch-lit marble city, toward Mareotis, and the Nile, and the mysterious Land of Khem.

Full loads at last, and a roll-call. Angry protests from seamen too badly bruised or broken-headed to be useful. Weapons. Armor. Inspection. Two or three more thrown out for looking slack in the ranks and unfit for duty. Quick work by the doctor—there was hardly a man without a bandage. Assignment of places in the boats, each boat and each thwart numbered and each man numbered to a thwart.

Aristobolus, with his hands tied and his head in a wheat-sack, lowered into the second boat in charge of Conops. Alexis, looking like a lost exquisite, sweating and rather soiled but philosophically cheerful, jumping into Tros' place in the leading boat—rebuked for it by three Jews and three seamen, who came near throwing him overboard. A last word with Esias and sleepy Ahiram.

CHAPTER VII

"NEVER AGAIN TO SPEAK OF BOIDION"

AT FIRST, the only hardship was the flies. A sailor's skin is toughened to resist such cleanly and natural elements as ropes' ends, hail, the twist of tight-caught oars. There are no flies at sea, and a hoarse-tail fly-switch is a unseamanly device with which to comfort the lips and eyes of honest oarsmen.

But there was not much rowing. They lay flicking themselves and wondering what monstrous dangers lay to southward. Lions they had seen, in the park cages in Alexandria, and on ship-board

on the way to Rome; and crocodiles; and even one hippopotamus.

But there were stories of serpents, a half-mile long, that swallowed ships at a gulp; of a land of perpetual night, inhabited by bats that sucked men's life-blood; of ogres that lived in sepulchres; and of two-headed women with one breast apiece, who could drive an arrow through the stoutest armor, and who ate men's entrails.

True, Lord Captain Tros had been right as usual; there was a north wind. The canal from Maretois to the Nile had been dug by a Ptolemy's engineers so oriented as to make a soldier's breeze, eight or nine months in the year, for the laden barges. The lord captain had promised the wind would blow them up the river, and he might be right again. But they had heard stories of whirlpools, rapids, cataracts, and of many a ship that sailed up-Nile but had never come home again.

It made no difference to men recovering from drink, and totally ignorant of their destination or the purpose of the expedition, that they kept continually passing laden barges, all from the south.

The south was an ominous mystery. Their heads ached. They made very little conversation, and kept the flotilla closely enough spaced to satisfy even the lord captain's demands.

It was nearly low-Nile and the current was sluggish. When the wind failed, at bends of the river or in the lee of cultivated islands, the rowing was not particularly hard work. But it was mostly sailing; and at night-fall, when Tros called a halt at the site of a very ruinous temple, there was less than fifteen minutes between the leading and the last boat, and every one was cheerful except Aristobolus, whose hands were no longer bound, but who had spent nearly sixteen hours in Conops' company.

He looked, by that time, as if he might prefer to be talked to by sepulchral ghouls or devils from the world beyond the sources of the Nile.

The Nile was Main Street. They were passing through the richest and most densely populated cultivated zone on earth, where there were villages every few miles and even the reeds were harvested for fuel. There was a continual stream of north-bound traffic. The only reason why they had that reedy bivouac to themselves was because the spirits of the ancient dead were said to haunt the place.

The evening wind in the reeds, the rustling of the night-fowl and the eerie darkness of Egyptian night combined to create terror. There were hermits, like huge owls, in the ruins. Two of them were bald, scrawny old females—speechlessly, piously lousy.

The men refused to sleep ashore; they ate their meal in a hurry, in silence, and piled back into the boats. They implored Tros not to risk his life in the ruined temple precincts. But he ordered Conops and a squad to sweep the fleas and bat-filth from a stone-paved chamber, and there he lit a fire and invited Aristobolus and Alexis.

The two Alexandrines eyed each other with alert suspicion. They ate in silence, except when Alexis complained of his lack of a servant to wash him and bring him a change of linen; if he had no other reason, he had been too lazy to unpack his enormous roll of bedding and belongings. They omitted to drink to each other, even when Tros poured the wine and made a hospitable gesture to them both.

However, Alexis had been in the leading boat. Tros had talked to him. He was well primed—knew what was expected of him. So, as soon as the meal was finished, Tros went out to wash himself and to post sentries and make sure that the boats were well moored. He took plenty of time about it, and when he returned the two men appeared to be

not exactly friendly but to have reached some sort of understanding.

"Look here," said Aristobolus, "your man Conops has been telling me all day long that you're at logger-heads with the queen—that you only escaped death by jumping off the royal barge and swimming. That confirms what I told him to tell you—that you are on the proscription list. Am I right?"

"I had a narrower escape from four of your freedmen!" Tros answered.

"So? What happened?"

"What will happen to you also, unless you obey me—in thought, speech, action, and in the very manner of your gestures! I will presently say what I wish you to do. And I will split you like a fish if you refuse to do it. That is not a threat. It is a statement of fact."

Aristobolus digested the information, then continued:

"Your man Conops told me—he said it twenty times, or oftener—that you intend to throw in your lot with those of us who look for a change on the throne."

"Conops is in my confidence," Tros answered.

"Alexis says he has the same intention."

"And you?" Tros asked him.

"Sacrament of Isis! I ran a thousand risks, yesterday morning, didn't I, to warn you of the danger you were in, and to implore you to join Boidion?"

"You said Arsinoe."

"I know it. Was there time, in the street, with the queen's spies everywhere, to tell you all the details of a plot that has taken us weeks to contrive, after months of study? Man, be reasonable! And consider now how you have treated me!"

"I saved you from the queen's men," Tros answered. "I was asked where you are. I could only reply that I had slain your freedmen, who attacked me."

"That puts another complexion on it."

"But not on my demands on you!" Tros answered. "You tried to trap me—"

"For your own good, to take you to Boidion!"

"That failing, you tried to have me murdered."

"Why not? I mistrusted you. How should I know you wouldn't turn my name in to the queen's police?"

"You know now! You have told my man Conops the story of Boidion, and Conops has told me. Has our friend Alexis heard it? Tell him."

"Yes," said Alexis, "he told me when you just now left us alone to digest that vulture's food that you adorned with the magical title of supper."

"What did you think of it?" Tros asked.

"Garbage! Army contract garbage! During the past year I have had all my meals at the royal table. Could anybody but a sailor ask me what I think of *that* stuff?"

"Belly! I spoke of Boidion?"

"Oh, her? Well, Boidion has the advantage, from our viewpoint, that she has never been Queen of Egypt, whereas Arsinoe has been. Arsinoe, it is true, didn't last long. Caesar, to use his own phrase, readjusted her condition to comply with custom and the law of Egypt. Damned old humbug! What was *he* doing in Egypt? However, Arsinoe had time to learn more than a little. And when they know too much, they're difficult.

"Witness our present queen. It's a mistake to try to win races with beaten horses—probably an even worse mistake to bet on a defeated queen to win a revolution. That is why, hitherto, I have set my face against Arsinoe and have continued to be what is known as loyal. But Boidion, who is said to resemble Arsinoe so closely that they look like each other's reflection in a mirror, might be—I say *might* be—a shrewd man's venture. Anyway, what choice have you or Aristobolus, with your names on the queen's list?

"You already know my mind," Tros answered, and they nodded. They believed they understood him. "I propose that we three shall take oath, tonight, together, never again to speak of Boidion, but of Queen Arsinoe."

He filled the wine-cups, groping for them by the light of the dying embers.

"Queen Arsinoe of Egypt!" said Aristobolus, drinking. "I swear to that. By Zeus, and by the Holy Sacrament, I swear to live or die by Queen Arsinoe of Egypt!"

"Queen Arsinoe!" said Alexis, wry-faced because the wine was the stuff that Esias sold to deep-sea captains. "I am superstitious. I don't like to take oaths about dying. Death is a damned unpleasant event that will occur too soon, no matter when."

It was Tros' turn. "By my own good name, and for my soul's sake, and for the sake of Egypt, I will do my best for Queen Arsinoe."

"You talk like a shaveling priest, you stormy war-horse!" said Alexis. "Soul? How much for it? If I could lay hands on my own, I would sell it for one night of joyous living."

"Aye," added Aristobolus, "and you would sell it for the sake of your hair and hide! The queen's torturers will attend to us three if we fail. It seems to me, we can trust one another. What now?"

"Do you know where to find her?" Tros asked.

Aristobolus perceived his value.

"Do I? Is it likely I would go to all that trouble to persuade you, if I couldn't go straight to her hiding place?"

"Then you shall go!" said Tros. "And you shall take Alexis with you. You shall say I come with all possible haste with a hundred men."

"You astonish me even more than him!" remarked Alexis. "Do you always go in for astonishing people? I think we should stick together. Suppose I refuse?"

"It would be pleasanter," said Tros, "than being torn to pieces in the queen's dungeon. But to die for disobedience has always seemed to me a miserable death."

Alexis sounded as if he swallowed something. He made no other comment.

"We are to go on ahead of you?" Aristobolus asked. "How then will you find us? We are likely to be difficult to follow. There are no streets in the desert. And," he added slowly, "we should not feel—shall I call it fortunate?—if you should turn aside, or retreat, and leave us trying to explain to desperate venturers why we have brought them false news. What guarantee do you offer? What pledge?"

"Conops!"

TROS' quarterdeck voice startled the owls, awoke wild-fowl in the reeds and brought even a hermit peering at him over the edge of a broken cornice. Alexis threw a lump of broken masonry at the hermit and helped himself to the sour wine with a shrug of resignation. He rubbed his face with the stuff, to allay the irritation of fly-and mosquito-bites. Conops appeared; at a sign from Tros he squatted, his one eye as bright as a cat's in the glow from the embers.

"Choose the eight best rowers from the whole flotilla, Conops. You may also have two of the Jews—your own choice. Take these noblemen up-river, at the fastest speed you can make. You are to eat and sleep by watches. Speed is the main thing. Set both noblemen ashore, with a day's provisions, wherever the Lord Aristobolus says is his destination. Wait there for me. Hide if you can, but keep a good lookout."

"Aye, aye, master."

"When?" asked Aristobolus.

"Now! When you have reached your objective, you will send back somebody to guide me after I have picked up Conops."

Aristobolus objected:

"Tros, there isn't any need for all this strategy. If we should have the luck to get up-river without being intercepted by the queen's patrol, there will be more than a guide waiting for us, I can faithfully assure you. Some one in Alexandria must have talked, and far too many of us have been caught in the queen's net; but do you suppose we have been such clowns as not to arrange a good line of communication? Once we're beyond the Delta, there isn't a living human being who isn't on our side. They wait for nothing but enough armed men to strike a quick blow at Memphis. Victory will lead to victory. The queen's troops will all come over to our side if we win one battle."

"Very likely," said Tros. "But you will do as I tell you. Go and choose your rowers, Conops."

"Tros," said Alexis calmly, "you're a vile commander of an expedition. You begin by offending all the prejudices of the men on whom you must depend."

"Do I depend on you—or you on me? Or do we all depend on obedience?" Tros retorted. "Criticize me later, when you know what I know, and when you see what I do."

"Criticize me now, Tros. I would like to hear you."

"No. The queen has done that. She instructed me to trust you. That is why I send you forward."

"I will go. I can't refuse you," said Alexis, but he sounded less unwilling than his words implied.

Tros nodded. He went outside and had private word with Conops. He gave secret orders and then, presently, advice:

"Mark my word, little man: the one to keep your eye on is Alexis. He pretends to be the queen's man, but he is not. Aristobolus is a mere bungler, who can see no farther than his nose. Take a look in Alexis' baggage while he sleeps."

"Aye, aye, master."

"It would do no harm if he should think me, as Aristobolus thinks I am, disgusted with the queen. Are the Northmen's axes in my boat?"

"Aye, aye. I have set them there in place of the Lord Alexis' dunnage."

Fifteen minutes later, Conops started upstream—an oar-pulsed shadow on the star-lit bosom of the river.

One hour later, the flotilla followed. In the stern of the leading boat Tros slept, at ease, unworried. He had laid his bet on the board. The outcome was for Destiny to unfold. And if Destiny should call upon him for some Odyssean wit and Herculean energy, he had it, and would use it to the limit.

But he dreamed. It was not normal for Tros to dream of women. He dreamed of a girl in armor.

CHAPTER VIII

"BRACELET MAKER!"

PURPLE Egyptian night. The rising full moon barely beginning to silver the eastern sky. Absolute darkness in among the reeds, and almost utter silence; the wind's whisper out-soughed men's breathing. The wide river a mirror of stars. An occasional clank of steel as some one's weapon touched his neighbor's armor—an occasional thump of boat against boat. A hum of insects. A mud smell from the caked bank.

A hippopotamus blew, in mid-river; and somewhere over on the far bank half a mile away a lion roared, melancholy—lonely. The flotilla lay moored to the reeds, invisible, straining to catch Conops' words.

"Aye, master. I put 'em ashore about five miles south o' here, at a temple. It looks mighty like a town. There's a fleet o' boats there—some of 'em good big ones. Five-and-thirty armed men—looked like Syrians to me, in scraps of old Roman uniform and what not—

rushed to the pier the minute I hailed—and the priests not taking notice. Any number o' priests. I'd say I saw, all told, about two hundred soldiers bivouacked alongside a high white wall that comes pretty near down to the river. Four men whipped the Lord Alexis' luggage out of the boat. I'd looked; there wasn't much more in it, master, than enough fine clothes to keep him looking ship-shape for a year, I'd say, maybe longer; and perhaps some money, in a big leather bag inside his bed-linen. He doesn't believe you're a rebel, but Aristobolus does. It's my belief Alexis means to set an ambush for us. I and the crew were bidden welcome, but I backed away to save argument and came on down-stream, same as you said. That was yesterday morning, and the lad's about all in; there's a Gaul so blistered he'll be no use for two or three days."

"We've enough blistered men to stand by the boats. Go ahead. What did you find out?"

"I scouted all yesterday afternoon, and all today. Yonder, master—you can't see 'em from here—four or five miles from here to there, across corn land, but the corn's all been harvested—are the pyramids, and the Sphynx. Tombs, too—thousands of 'em, I'd say. There's a school o' mummies, all laid out like fish to dry; they're stripping 'em, I guess for jewelry.

"There are three sets of buildings set in a triangle, wide apart. There's a mud-and-straw barrack, near a well in a hollow, with maybe three or four hundred laborers; but they're nothing—needn't reckon with 'em—they eat whip like donkeys. Near by them is a better built barrack, full o' soldiers, queen's men I reckon, as shabby as Rhakotis beggars, but well armed. They're a mixed lot, with Greek officers—I'd say about two hundred men, with their officers horsed on little bits o' nags that eat date-straw. I saw 'em do it."

"Where are our Northmen?"

"Master, I'm laying it out the way I conned it. Let me pay the rope out end-first, or I'll get it snarled. I left the lads here. I went yonder and climbed a pyramid. There's three big ones, and several smaller. The biggest's as big as a mountain. You can't climb that one, it's all smooth white stone—steep as our shrouds, pretty near, and no foothold. But some of the casing of the next biggest is broken, so that one's easy, but it's hotter up there than a spitted kidney. It was too hot for flies. But there were scorpions.

I was stung twice—found a Gypsy woman later, and she gave me breast-milk to put on the bites, so I wouldn't bite myself to death the way I've heard happens. I had a good view from up near the top. Between the two biggest pyramids, corner to corner, there are two long mud-brick walls, and they're patrolled at night by soldiers. Inside that space there's a four-walled enclosure of mud-brick.

"Inside that is the smallest o' the three sets of buildings—a barrack o' some sort, and it's there I think they berth our Northmen, and I think they chain 'em nights, but I'm not dead sure o' that either. It was after sunset when I counted, seemed to me, eight-and-thirty fellows, pretty well tuckered, being herded out of a hole in the ground—maybe a tomb—toward that place I just told you. By the time I was down off the pyramid—it's a long run around from the rear, and me as thirsty as a salt fish—they were all inside the wall, and I couldn't get by the soldiers. But I thought I heard chains. The wall's about two o' my height, and the gate's a boat's deck—takes a dozen men to shift it."

"What then?"

"Came back here for food and sleep. After supper, rowed across the river. Camp o' black tents in a hollow near the far bank, and a lot o' camels. It's all

desert to eastward, but there's reeds, and there were two boats in the reeds. Just on general principles I tried to steal the boats, but they'd a watch set, and one of our lads got a cut on the arm—the left arm—nothing serious. So I came back, and before sunrise I was off again, scouting. I tried listening at the soldier's barracks, but I didn't dare get caught or you'd ha' lacked information. And besides, I thought I'd time enough—didn't expect you until tomorrow night, master. You must ha' come like holy Hermes."

"So what?"

"Up-river, as I told you, there's a temple and about a couple o' hundred armed men—maybe more, with Aristobolus and Alexis and I don't know who else. From the temple there's a road that leads to Memphis. You can see the roofs of Memphis. It's a big city. There's another road between the pyramids and Memphis, but no traffic. All day long not a sign of a living man on both roads. But over yonder, by the pyramids, they're digging out mummies by the dozen. If our Northmen are there, I couldn't swear to it. I didn't see 'em. They were down in a hole in the ground before I got there, and it was dark before they let 'em out. So I came back."

"And?"

"Master, I'm not lying. I'm a dolphin's uncle if I didn't jump slap in the lap o' that Princess Arsinoe—her that we left behind in Cyprus. She was sitting down here, talking free and easy to the boat's crew, and them telling her who they are, and where they come from, and where you are. I jumped from the top of the bank, being scared o' snakes, and fell right over her. I rolled off quick. I'd seen her dagger a man in the fight off Salamis. She knew me in a minute—called me by name."

"Was she alone?"

"No. Two boat-loads o' men; I counted ten in one boat; the other boat was down-stream a way, in the reeds, and I couldn't see how many. The men I did see were some o' the pirates we took prisoner and you gave to her in

Salamis. The boats were the same we'd tried to make away with from the far bank."

"Men armed?"

"To the teeth."

"How long ago was that?"

"Two hours—maybe two hours and a half."

The moon rose, bathing the land in silver streaked with shadows. The river began to look like molten metal.

"What did she say?"

"Nothing. Barring telling me I stink worse than if I'd been buried a week, she said never a word. Seems I'd hurt her instep. She was spitting mad for a couple o' minutes. Then she laughed. Then she up and went, walking, with a man behind her carrying that suit of armor we lent her and never got back."

"Which way?"

"The way I'd come—toward the pyramids, across the belt of corn land. Her men followed—maybe twenty all told."

"And?"

"I scuttled both her boats. They'd set no boat watch."

"No sign of the Lord Alexis?"

"No. Nor of Aristobolus."

Tros cursed the moon. Then, presently, he blessed it. He climbed the bank and made his way to high ground. The whole landscape was bathed in pale white light, streaked with dark shadows of ridges that lay like watercourses, roughly south and north, but there was one wide shadow that curved northwestward until it reached the Great Pyramid and seemed to pour into a pool of ink beyond.

One pyramid looked black, another gray, but the great one gleamed like marble. He could see the lights of Memphis—very few, scattered apart. There was a dark line that was likely a mud-brick wall, and he could count six watch-fires; probably there were others, down in the dunes, but all Egypt had to be thrifty of fuel. It looked like a long way to Memphis, and the land looked as dead as the bones of death itself, and deathly quiet.

SUDDENLY he saw what made him bless the moon. There were men on the march—southward—away from the pyramids—not along the road to Memphis, but toward what appeared to be low ground, with what might be the roof of a building barely visible, about midway between Memphis and the Nile. Even with a seaman's eyes it was very difficult to judge direction or distance, and it was impossible to count the marching men because of the shadows they cast, but they might be a couple of hundred, a few more or a few less, with officers on little bits of horses. They appeared to have no baggage-train.

Was Arsinoe with them? If so, what of Boidion? Was the Boidion story a mare's nest? Or had Conops mistaken Boidion for Arsinoe? Tarquinius the Etruscan might easily have given Arsinoe's armor to Boidion, and might easily have informed her well enough to call Conops by name. According to Conops the girl had said very little—perhaps from fear of self-betrayal. She had gone away in the direction of the pyramids. It might be—it looked like it—she probably was leading, or being led, to unite with the forces from the temple up-river for a march on Memphis. Four or five hundred men might easily take Memphis; there would only be police, and perhaps a few officers and a rabble of impressed, hurriedly armed citizens to be overwhelmed.

Were the Northmen with her? Very likely. They would certainly prefer the prospect of plundering Memphis to the dreary, unpaid task of mining through the sand for the loot, for some one else, from ancient tombs. Surely they would rather fight any one, anywhere, than toil under the whips of Egyptian overseers.

Tros made his decision.

"Conops! Take your boat up-river,

and set fire to their shipping. Scuttle and burn."

"Aye, aye, master. What then?"

"Return down-stream and follow me. I'm going to march toward the pyramids and make a demonstration in the rear of those soldiers. I intend to burn their barracks. Get going. I'll attend to the landing party."

"Aye, aye, master."

Conops vanished up-stream, with a boat-load of dry reeds and a very carefully tended earthen fire-pot. Tros ordered his men ashore, selected the badly blistered ones to stand by the boats, distributed the Northmen's battle-axes and armor, and was on the march almost before the thump of Conops' oars had died away around the bend of the river.

It was after midnight—the shadows shortening—so he had to make haste. He wasted no time avoiding Egyptian huts that looked, and stank, like hog-pens, where the peasantry lay silent, quaking in dread of forced porterage and all other incidences to the march of armed men.

No stragglers. The weird moonlight stirred superstition. They marched in terror, in close order, wondering that Tros should dare to lead toward such monstrous, mysterious things as pyramids, from which they expected to see devils come forth. Word went down the line in whispers that the column they could see in the distance on their left front was fleeing from the ghosts of the ancient dead. They had heard Conops' tale of the mummies lying stripped and desecrated. So they crowded one another's heels.

It was cool, so the weight of their armor was impediment. They marched swiftly. But though they marched in shadow, in the lee of a long ridge, on dusty earth that smothered sound, the moon shone on their helmets, and Tros did not know whether they had been seen or not when, at the end of an hour and a half, he halted them within the awful shadow of the Great Pyramid's western side.

He advanced alone, forth from the shadow, until he could see past the pyramid in the direction of the Nile, and twice he almost fell into an open tomb. The horizon blazed smoky crimson. Conops had succeeded; a whole fleet of boats was burning. Tros returned to his men, but he couldn't get volunteers to cross the moonlit waste of sand and set fire to the soldiers' barracks; they were overawed by the monstrous pyramid that loomed and seemed to lean against the starry sky. He had to pick a dozen men and lead them himself.

He fired the roof-thatch with his own hand. Then, as the dry stuff caught and roared skyward, all the laborers stampeded from the other barrack—fled like ghosts, scattering. He had to go alone to fire those other roofs; his men were willing to fight lions, or even dragons, but not phantoms.

But when they saw him stand alone in the glare of the blazing thatch they were ashamed and approached him. He pointed up-Nile to the glare of the burning boats, where Conops had done his duty.

"So now! I have served my challenge on the Lord Alexis! He can march on Memphis if he pleases, but I think he will first come here to slay me, and perhaps to try to win you to his side against the Queen of Egypt."

"We are few, Lord Captain. We are very few indeed to fight a battle," said some one.

"Shall I fight alone?" Tros answered.

"Nay, nay."

"Then obey me."

Whether or not Alexis was a traitor to the queen—and Tros had small doubt on that point; whether or not Alexis was in control, or could make his advice prevail, it was an absolute certainty that the rebels now knew they had Tros and a hundred men to deal with, at their rear, before they could dare to attack

Memphis. If Conops had burned all their boats, their retreat, as an organized force, toward Upper Egypt, was out of the question, at least for the time being.

Irresolution might encourage Memphis to attack them, whereas, if they should act swiftly and defeat Tros, that would discourage Memphis; it might even cause the immediate surrender of the city—an initial success that would probably bring over to their side whole regiments of the queen's corrupt and discontented army, from the Red Sea ports, and Pelusium, and from places higher up the Nile.

THERE was almost no doubt what the enemy would do, there being almost nothing else that they could do. But there was plenty of time now. It would be hours before they could unite and attack. They might wait until daylight. They probably would.

No sign of Arsinoe. No sign of the Northmen. The great wooden gate in the mud-brick wall between the pyramids that Conops had described stood wide open. So did the gate in the inner wall. No guards, no sentries. Half in moonlight, half in shadows, the great enclosure lay forlorn and silent.

"Too late!" Tros muttered, cursing himself for having let the flotilla rest too often on the way, for the sake of arriving fit for action. For a moment he was almost irresolute—almost ready to retreat to the boats. Then he began to consider a plan of battle, and his eye fell again on the long, high, mud-brick wall that enclosed the space between the two great pyramids.

If there was water in there, it would do; and for the moment, in any event, it would do to give his scared men a sense of security. He decided to return to them and lead them into the enclosure through the open gate. With his frightened squad behind him he crossed the moonlit open ground and strode into the gloom.

He almost jumped out of his armor. It took every scrap of iron self-control he owned to stand still and not show himself stunned with astonishment.

"Hail! Hail! Hail!"

"Tros! Tros! Tros!"

Eight-and-thirty battle-axes swung aloft and trembled to the thrill of their owner's welcome. Seven-and-thirty Northmen, bearded, unkempt, lean, stood in line behind Sigurdsen, their leader. All Tros' other men had broken ranks; they had become an almost invisible audience that crowded to see what would happen. They could see Tros' face; his feet were in shadow, his head in moonlight.

During six full seconds he stood rigid with his hand at the salute.

"I am glad," he said then, holding his voice to the gruff, unemotional note that carries home the full weight of a man's good faith and will.

Then he went and shook hands with Sigurdsen, who had ruled a tiny Baltic kingdom until the day when Tros met him in single combat and beat him to his knees. He was older than Tros and a full head taller. He was sobbing.

Tros punched him, friendly fashion, and then walked along the line to shake hands with each in turn, until, at the end of the line, he came to Angsgar the skald, a shorter, thick-set, thoughtful looking man. Tros laughed then.

"Gold-beater!" he said. "Bracelet maker!"

"Aye, Lord Captain. A heavy bracelet is a better weapon than a dagger on a dark night."

"It was dark until I set eyes on it," Tros answered. "That was good work, Angsgar."

He returned to his place in front of them and stood staring. There was some one else in armor, out in front, beside Sigurdsen, about six paces from him, on his right hand—perhaps even slightly in front of Sigurdsen—small as compared to those Northmen, and

slight, but very straight in armor.

Whoever it was—and Tros knew who it was—had stood there from the first, but Tros had chosen not to see. He knew what courtesy demanded, even common kindness. But his quick wit failed him. He stood silent until the moon's rim rose above the pyramid and moonlight shone on the crestless helmet and the pale, girl's face beneath. Then he spoke:

"Who are you?"

It seemed a senseless question, but he had chosen it from half a hundred others that he might have asked—that he would have liked to ask.

She answered in a good round fearless voice:

"Arsinoe, the captain of your Northmen!"

"In the Queen of Egypt's name, I left you in Salamis, Queen of Cyprus!"

"I prefer to command your Northmen!"

"You are my prisoner!"

"Very well. I have done as I pleased. You will do as you please."

Kill her? Not if he knew it! Since his Baltic wife died on a beach in Gaul he had never seen a woman whom he liked as he did this one. But what could he do with her? How save her from Cleopatra's malice?

"I gave you one chance," he said, "to die in battle."

She laughed. "Did I refuse it—noticeably? Then try me again—Lord Captain!"

CHAPTER IX

"DID YOU THINK TO WIN EGYPT WITH TWO DOZEN MEN?"

CLIMAX had broken the spell of superstitious fear. The men rallied. They obeyed. None needed to be told they were in deadly danger, but now it was tangible and they understood it. There were no supplies. No archer had more than fifty arrows. Their line of retreat to the boats could be cut, and the boats could be seized or scuttled easily, by a mere raiding party.

They followed Tros—first the Northmen, then Arsinoe's four-and-twenty pirates, then the flotilla's crew—in column of fours into the walled enclosure. But there was no water in there; even if they could carry enough water, the wall would not be easy to defend.

Every last man knew the case was desperate. Some of them went to the well and began hauling water into earthern jars that the Egyptians had left behind.

Tros selected ten seamen for outpost duty and told all the others to lie down and sleep. He had decided to wait for Conops, who might bring reliable information. He posted his sentries, stationed the men with the sharpest eyes a hundred feet up the flank of the pyramid that Conops had climbed, and returned for the inevitable drum-head council. He would have preferred to postpone it, but there was no avoiding a talk with Arsinoe. As he knew from the experience in Cyprus, she was capable of day-long silences; but she was also capable of forcing issues. And he didn't know what to say to her.

He wanted information from her without being forced to reveal his own thoughts, or his own predicament. He could think of no other way than to gain time, and perhaps exhaust her patience, by making her wait until he had the Northmen's story.

Most of the men were already sprawling on the sand, but the Northmen had built a fire of broken baskets, straw and splinters chopped from the gate. They were squatting around it, two deep. They had left a space for Tros, and a box to sit on, so he sat and faced Sigurdsen.

Sigurdsen and Angsgar the skald were the only two who could talk Greek fluently, and it was useless to expect a

plain tale from Angsgar; runes were already running in his mind; he would presently sing a story, in which facts would merely be the seeds of splendid fiction.

Angsgar was an artist—Sigurdsen a pessimist, who battle-axed the truth to lay bare gloom, on which to base a mood of melancholy discontent: a loyal man, unhappy unless he had something to grumble about.

It was a long box that they had laid bottom upward. Arsinoe came and sat beside Tros. She laid her helmet on the box between them and her copperygolden hair fell loose on her shoulders. She sat with a sword between her knees and said nothing to Tros, who did his best to pretend she was not there.

"And so now we all die," said Sigurdsen. "It is a bad end, to be buried among these mummies, in a land where no man's word is worth the breath he uses. But it is good that you came, Tros. We had given up hope of ever seeing you, until she came. They told us you had gone to sea and left us to our fate. We had to dig, or die of hunger. And at night they chained us. But because we were chained the guards grew careless, and we were making a plan for escape to the Nile, when her man came from over-river, and stole through the dark, spying.

"He had word with us; and when he had learned whose men we are, he told of the fight off Salamis, and how you had given your prisoners, of whom he was one, to her. And he said she needs men who will fight to the death. And much more also he said. We bade him take back word to her that if we can we will escape across the Nile. And he went, and we made a new plan.

"So tonight, when it was time to cease work in the tomb, and the commander of the guards came and offered us freedom if we will march under his command in an assault on Memphis, we drove him forth with our picks and shovels. So he summoned men and they tried to kill us all, but we were hard to come at. So they tried to bury us alive. But they let in not enough sand, and we dug our way out, in darkness. They were marching away, so we lay still.

"Then she came. And she said she has news of you, and of your coming. And at that, we became like men who are drunk with strong drink. So we appointed her captain, being, as I say, as men drunk.

"But we hid, because you came so soon that we doubted it could be you. We crept near in the darkness. And while you were burning the barracks we called some of the seamen by name, and they knew us. And now you know all, saving what she told us. Let her tell it."

"Though I die for it, I will not," said Arsinoe, "unless Lord Captain Tros himself asks."

"If it pleases you," he said, "be silent."

For the space of at least a minute there was no other sound than bated breathing. Then Arsinoe spoke:

"Very well. Here is my sword. Do you want my armor? If you propose to silence me forever, cut my throat now!"

She stood up. So did Tros. He was raging with emotion that felt like anger, and as such he used it.

"Princess, I left you in Cyprus, well provided. Is it your idea of gratitude to come and raise this—"

Quite suddenly he realized he was not angry. It was another emotion, less familiar, less easy to govern.

"But since you have come," he said, "be seated. Tell me."

She laughed. They sat down again, side by side. Her laugh was rather disconcerting; she had Cleopatra's gift of seeing through a man and of understanding his motives.

"Lord Captain Tros," she said quietly, "do you wish to be King of Egypt?"

"No," he answered.

"Neither do I wish to be Queen of

Cyprus, so perhaps we can understand each other."

"Did you think to win Egypt with two dozen men?" he asked her.

"I was Queen of Egypt once," she answered. "I am no longer a queen of anywhere. I do not wish to be one, and I will not. Even as you, I am here to prove my spirit and to die if need be. You have heard of Boidion?"

Tros nodded. She seemed to wish to be questioned, but he waited, and presently she continued:

She is at that temple, up-river. She has called herself Arsinoe, or has let them call her so. She believes me dead —or did believe it. That Etruscan jackal Lars Tarquinius, whom you left to command my bodyguard—"

Tros interrupted. "Ahenobarbus did it."

She laughed again, delighted to have Tros on the defensive. But he made no further comment, so she continued:

"Lars Tarquinius, who is such a jackal that he would betray himself, if there were no one else to betray, began to speak to me of Boidion before you were gone an hour from Salamis. He suggested to me that we should encourage Boidion to make a raid on Egypt, calling herself Arsinoe; and it was clear that the plot had long been cooking. I was to lie low, in hiding.

"Then, should Boidion succeed in raising a real rebellion, I should hasten to Egypt, and they would murder Boidion, and set me on the throne. But if Boidion should fail, then I should come out of hiding in Cyprus and denounce her, and all would be well.

"It was a very intelligent plot, and he proved to me that Herod, and even Cassius, would lend aid. But I said no to it. I care nothing for Boidion. Why should I? But I would not trust Tarquinius. And since you and I talked in Salamis I had lost my craving to be Queen of Egypt.

"I should have died that night, I suppose, because the plot was well forward and Tarquinius not to be balked. But his avarice saved me. He believed he could sell me to Herod; and the men whom you had given me were all captured pirates, who understood that business. So he told them they might have me, to take to Delos, where the slave-merchant Hipponax would know how to get in communication with Herod. And he furnished a boat, in which they put me at night with two women. And we set sail.

"But they were my men. It was my task to prove it. I did, and it was not so difficult, for they had seen me fight against them, on your ship. And they were as weary of being pirates as I was weary of being used as a pawn in a game by scoundrels and cowards. I made them promise, and I said I would bring them to you if I could do it. But, of course, I did not dare to go to Alexandria; nor did I dare to write to you any more than I did write, for fear Cleopatra might lay her hands on the letter, and suspect you, and have you put to death. I know my sister!

"Words you had said to me burned in my mind. I might have sent a letter to expose the plot, and thus I might even have bought Cleopatra's friendship. But I had made up my mind what I want, and I knew it might not be had by betrayals and writing letters. It was my name they were misusing. It was me they should deal with. It was I who should do as you would do and play my own hand against whatever odds destiny sends. I would deal face to face with Boidion and her masters, who she probably supposes are her servants.

"So we came to Pelusium, pretending to be a slave ship, because the slavers can come and go where it is unsafe for any one else. Old Esias was at Pelusium."

TROS whistled softly to himself. Careful Esias had played safe, had he? Always on the winning side, Esias, and yet

never to be caught in an intrigue, because he never did too much, nor too soon.

"Esias was awfully afraid. But I sold him the vessel and borrowed money from him—quite a lot of money. I was almost caught in Pelusium, because I paid my men and they got drunk. But Esias hid me, and sent his slaves to round them up. And it was from Esias that I learned how Boidion had crossed the desert, and how the border patrol had been bribed to know nothing about it. She had gone up the eastern branch of the Nile, she and her party, in a number of vessels that belong to the priests and are not subject to search.

"I bought equipment in Pelusium—black Arabian tents and many other things. I, and my two women, and my four-and-twenty men went up the Nile in laden barges to Heliopolis. It was easy for my men to pretend they were travelers on the way to Arabia. No one questioned them. And as for me and my women, we were wives of Memphis merchants on our way home. I had bought two men-slaves in Pelusium, at a very high price, because Esias recommended them; so that we looked like respectable women. They are very good slaves. They have been spying for me. They brought me news of the arrival of Alexis and Aristobolus; and I knew then it would not be long before they would march on Memphis."

"Do you know Alexis?" Tros asked.

"No. But Tarquinius told me his name, as one who is in Cleopatra's confidence but who is the actual first inventor of the plot to make use of Boidion.

"I was camped on the far bank, as I daresay Conops told you. I bought camels. They are there now. Conops came to steal my boats. I didn't know it was Conops—not then. But, as Sigurdsen has told you, one of my men came spying here and brought back word; so I decided to come here, at all risks, and to try to rescue these Northmen, and perhaps also to win over some of the soldiers. I found Conops' boat on this side of the river, and the men whom he had left to guard it talked like children, because they had seen me in battle on your ship. So I knew you were coming. And then Conops nearly killed me by accident. And where the faithful dog is, his master is not far distant."

"Oh-heh! Number One! Conops!" cried a voice in outer darkness.

"Oh-heh! Number Two! Conops!"

"Oh-heh! Number Three! Conops!"

Silence. Hurrying, staggering footfalls, deadened by the sand. Then a voice:

"Where's master?"

"This way!"

Ten men reeled through the open gate behind another who was bow-legged and hardly higher than the others' shoulders. Then Conops' unmistakable voice:

"Halt! 'Ten-shun! Fall out now and get yourselves a drink. Then down the hatch for a couple o' snores and sleep like dead men! You'll be needed at daybreak, sure as death. Stand at ease! Stand easy! Fall away!"

He shoved himself a passage between seated men and stood with his back to the fire, saluting Tros, but he couldn't keep his one eye off the Northmen. It danced sideways. He was grinning.

"Well? What?"

"Did it, master! It was easy. They were on the march already, direction o' Memphis. Nothing but a lot o' lousy priests to interfere with us. So we burned the pier, too. Scuttled some boats, burned the others and stood by to be sure they were caught good. Then we cut the moorings o' some and they drifted into dry reeds by the bank lower down. You'd ha' thought all Egypt was burning. It stopped 'em, I reckon. We came back down-stream as fast as we could make it, and our boats were all right, with the watch awake. From that bit o' high ground where you and I stood

conning, I could see 'em in full moonlight. They've met that column that we saw marching southward, and there they've all dropped anchor. Wondering what next, I reckon. My boat's crew are used up, master; I've dismissed 'em."

"You may lie on my cloak and get some sleep yourself," Tros answered. "You have done well."

Conops saluted and backed away, almost into the fire. He grinned all around the circle.

"Thought I smelt herring! Well, I've smelt worse! Battle-axe me if here isn't old top-mast himself, alive and growling natural! How's Odin?"

Tros interrupted:

"Manners, you wharf-rat!"

Conops came and faced Arsinoe. He straightened his face, straightened the knife at his belt, put his hands to his sides, his heels together, and bowed low.

"Your obedient servant, Princess!"

"Fall away!" Tros commanded. "Take my cloak and turn in!"

"Aye, aye, master."

CHAPTER X

"TROS! TROS!"

TROS' genius, like that of all true cruiser captains, was allied to the cavalry type. He habitually thought in terms of swift maneuver, ruse, economy of men, and sudden impact. But he had no cavalry. And in fighting on land he lacked experience. He knew it, but he was not the man to share that kind of secret, nor to let his men even suspect it.

Even Arsinoe, who watched him with a kind of cat-wise alertness, wondered at his apparent self-assurance. She knew, as well as he, how desperate the situation was, but she had yet to learn the first article of Tros' faith: that luck is on the side of him who knows luck when he sees it.

Luck began to arrive, a full hour before dawn. Scores of the peasant-laborers, who had fled southward from the burning barracks, served as well as any screen of scouting cavalry. They gave ample warning of the enemy's advance, coming phantoming back, to avoid being caught and made to carry ammunition, water and other heavy burdens. Besides, they knew where the supplies of ground millet, onions, radishes and oil were hidden in plundered tombs. So they were pounced on and looted in turn; every man in Tros' command had had a full meal before sunrise, chopping up the gate for fuel and building their little fires behind the wall, out of sight of the advancing enemy.

Tros made his depositions long before daylight. He could not afford to occupy a wide front, against what would be overwhelming numbers, unless his force was concentrated and kept well in hand. His scouts reported six war-chariots; those would probably be manned by archers, and used for out-flanking purposes.

He chose his battle-front with chariots in mind, taking Sigurdsen, Conops and five decurions to point out to them exactly the positions they should take up, and they marked their stations to avoid confusion. He let his men lie at ease behind the wall, avoiding the usual Roman commanders' mistake of upsetting nerves by getting tired men too soon into the battle-line.

Arsinoe came with him. There was no denying her. She was silent, but she seemed to be studying Tros and his depositions as if destiny depended, not on what he would do, but on understanding how and why he did it. A long thighed, actively striding girl, looking in her armor like a lad of eighteen. Sigurdsen paid her a good deal of attention. He told her her hair was like a Norse girl's, and that it was a pity she should die so young and lovely.

"For here we die. But we will hew our swath first! And perhaps they will take you prisoner."

Satisfied with his own assigned position, Sigurdsen took little interest in the rest of Tros' arrangements, although he gave advice when asked.

The left wing was to rest on the long wall with the gate fifty yards to its rear —seamen under the command of two decurions, Pertinax and Thestius.

The right wing under Conops, consisting of the ten Jews and thirty seamen, was to rest against a honeycomb of open tombs that would make them very difficult indeed to outflank. Sigurdsen and his battle-axemen were to hold the center, facing nearly due South.

Tros himself, with three decurions and thirty men, would take position with their backs to the well, in reserve, to reenforce any part of the line that looked like breaking. Between the center and the wings, on either side, some captured laborers were put to digging short trenches, in which the archers were to keep cover and be frugal with their perilously scanty ammunition.

Facing south by southwest, with the pyramids on their left hand, they would not have the sun in their eyes, as the enemy would have, should they attempt a turning movement.

At last Arsinoe broke silence.

"And I, Lord Captain? Where is my place?"

"Your men will be distributed to fight under my decurions. I have ordered it so."

She answered him very calmly and without heroics, but she held her chin high.

"Is this not my battle? Is it yours only? Do you think, because I am a woman, and a Ptolemy, I am unfit to lead my own men? They are my men."

"You will obey me."

"Then command me!"

It was true, he had ignored her. He could have told her to hide in a tomb, but he knew he would have to assign valuable men to keep her from coming out.

"You will stand by me with the reserve."

She saluted. He returned into the enclosure and talked to the men, explaining to them what they would be called upon to do, wasting no breath on bombast.

"You men know me, and I know you," he said finally. "Let us remember we are proud to be comrades in arms!"

There was no mistaking their answer. It was the growling roar of men who will do their ungrudging utmost. After that, he led his archers to the trenches and gave each man careful instruction.

Daybreak revealed the enemy less than half a mile distant, but Tros' position would remain for a long while yet in shadow. The intervening sand was ominously strewn with mummies that resembled blackened corpses on a stricken battle-field. Evidently Conops had only seen about half of the men at the temple up-river; the combined forces of the enemy, in dense formation, looked like five or six hundred men. Some of them were probably non-combatants; but there seemed, too, to be armed men in reserve, in the shadow around and behind a quite small pyramid. There were six two-horsed chariots out in front, in line, and in one of them stood a woman, not in armor.

She had two fan-bearers up behind her. Fans such as those were the royal insignia. Her chariot was surrounded by a dozen footmen in splendid armor. Scouting ahead was a line of about thirty men, advancing timidly, expecting to be met by arrow-fire from ambush.

"Boidion!" Arsinoe laughed. "Boidion, you poor fool!"

Not Boidion's chariot, but another, came trotting forward alone. The intention was obvious. From behind the screen of scouts its occupant proposed to harangue Tros' men, to offer terms, and perhaps to offer a price for Tros himself, dead or alive. But there was no sign of Tros' actual position until the

chariot approached too near to the hurriedly dug trenches.

Then a bow drawn by a Cretan archer twanged. The plumed and cloaked occupant of the chariot fell backward, clutching an arrow that pierced his throat. The charioteer whirled his horses and galloped away. The dead man's cloak became a rangemark for the archers.

IT WAS then that Conops' trumpet sounded "battle stations!" They poured through the gate in good order, in no haste, to their appointed places in the line. It was too late then for the enemy to alter a plan of battle conceived in the dark in overconfidence: a maneuver now, at such close quarters, would have offered Tros too good an opportunity to strike and rout the maneuvering companies.

Nor was it possible to come at his flank without being thrown into confusion by the honeycomb of open tombs; and to get behind him would entail a long march, leaving a reduced force facing them.

Their strategy was as evident as daylight: failing overtures, to rely on overwhelming numbers. They could no more afford to try to starve Tros out than could he afford to refuse battle. They must snatch swift victory or else abandon hope of taking Memphis. The city would surely not surrender to them, and incur the risk of Cleopatra's subsequent revenge, if there were a queen's force, undefeated, within striking distance. Alexis might know that the Queen had no trustworthy forces to send to Tros' support, but Memphis didn't know that. What Memphis did know was, that the queen held hostage and would be ruthless. It was fight, or fail before rebellion had well begun.

So the chariots wheeled away to the enemy's left flank. A fanfare of trumpets split the morning air. There arose a roar from the enemy's ranks, and the advance commenced, with barely space enough between the serried

companies to cushion the inevitable pressure of the wings on the center as they charged a narrower front than their own.

Tros, up on the well-coping with his back to the wooden gallows-post, groaned for his trireme's arrow-engines. They were a motley host that came against him—men of all races, armed as happened. There were Greeks in light hoplite armor; archers in bronze and leather; pikemen in heavy armor, helmeted like Roman gladiators; coal-black Nubians in lion-skin with ox-hide shields and iron-bladed stabbing spears that danced in the sun to the time of their thundering song.

In the center marched a heavy phalanx, eighty strong, of men who looked like Thracians. A scattering of Roman uniforms; some turbaned Parthians; Arabs; but no native Egyptians, except the wretched peasantry, who lugged heavy arrow-baskets in the rear of the thundering ranks. Ninety per cent of the officers were kilted Greeks, out in front of their men.

It was a force that should have wilted away under the fire of well-drilled archers; and Tros' archers were experts; but he had had to order them to hold fire until they could make every last arrow count at close range. Men had been told off to gather the enemy's arrows to replenish the few dozen that each archer had stuck in the sand in the trench beside him.

Sigurdsen's men crouched in the archers' trenches, leaving a tempting gap for the advancing phalanx. It came on at the double—a slow, heavy-pounding jog-trot, to break Tros' line at the gap. Tros' archers, at less than fifty yards range, sent a sudden, screaming hail of arrows into the light infantry on either flank of the phalanx, checking, for a moment halting them in confusion.

The phalanx came on alone, led by a Macedonian protected by two swordsmen. All three fell to Sigurdsen's axe—three swipes that split them down before they could think how to engage the unfamiliar weapon. Those were the first three to be slain in close combat.

Sigurdsen went berserk. Heaving the officer's corpse left-handed, he hurled it against three spearmen, leaped into the gap and battle-axed a swath for his men to follow through. They went in wedge-wise. Long spears, once their front was broken, were as useless against axes as so many ornamental awning-poles.

They were worse than useless. The swinging axes shored through bronze armor, or beat men to earth by the sheer weight of the blow. The recovering, back-handed up-swing was equally deadly, cleaving arm-pits, laying bellies open, splitting unguarded chins.

The phalanx went down, and was not. Three wounded Northmen rolled into an archer's trench, and Sigurdsen went forward, he and his men roaring their battle-cry:

"Tros! Tros!"

THAT was contrary to orders. Tros had forbidden a charge until he should perceive the right moment. Both his wings were being hard pressed. Conops on the right wing appeared to be doing well against Nubians, who were no match for the seamen who had stood off boarders in the storm off Salamis. But the seamen on the left wing under Pertinaux and Thestius were being forced backward along the wall.

The line was becoming bent like a taut bow. Two companies of the enemy formed column and rushed at a converging angle to split Tros' line in half by storming the gap that the Northmen had left in their rear. The Northmen were cut off—surrounded— fighting back to back.

Tros went into battle then. He charged with all his reserves behind him, to make the gap good.

There was ten minutes' carnage.

Wounded, with an arrow through the calf of his leg, recklessly protected by his seamen, Tros held the line, until at last the storming companies recoiled and Sigurdsen, ten Northmen shy, fought his way back, exhausted, bleeding, leaning on his axe to recover breath while his men rallied in line in the gap.

Tros' archers reopened a withering fire with the enemy's squandered arrows. The enemy's center was beaten, discouraged, and out of control.

"Charge!" yelled Sigurdsen.

Tros smote him. There was no other way to check that battle-drunkard. The left wing was curling up. The enemy had fought their way along the wall. The wall was in the way of a right-handed man, but they had won by weight of numbers. They were forming with their backs to the wall on Tros' flank.

Tros had forgotten Arsinoe. Now he saw her, fighting on the left wing, disobedient, but as good as a standard to rally around. She was in the midst of her own ex-pirates, plugging a gap in the recoiling left wing. They were fighting for her like well trained and determined devils.

Tros struck Sigurdsen again to get his full attention. He sent him with all his Northmen, hot-foot, to reinforce the left wing.

"Hold them until I join you!"

Tros had seen his chance—the enemy's mistake! Five chariots and at least a hundred men had been detached to make a westward circuit, away around beyond the right wing, with the obvious intention to attack from the rear. It would take them more than an hour to make that march over wind-rippled sand —perhaps longer.

At the same time their right wing was being heavily reinforced by men marching in column, in an effort to drive a wedge between Tros and the wall. They intended to have the wall. Tros saw fit to let them have it. They had left the line toward the boats wide open; all their reserves had been detached for that encircling movement.

Tros sent a man to command Arsinoe to come away from the left wing, and meanwhile reorganized his center. He sent another man for Conops, who arrived breathless. Conops went down on his knees and carefully cut through the shaft of the arrow that had pierced Tros' leg, leaving about two inches of the shaft protruding.

"Stand by for a hot one, master!"

He struck the protruding shaft one hard blow with the hilt of his heavy knife, then seized the arrow-point with his teeth and pulled it through. He wiped the blood off his face and looked swiftly for a dead or wounded man from whom to strip some sort of bandage.

Arsinoe had come. Tros was swearing at her. She had on a gossamer linen dress beneath her chain mail. Conops, as quick as lightning, knifed off yards of the thin material, and she laughed as he bound it around Tros' leg, artfully placing a pad to stop the bleeding.

"What now, master?"

Tros used terse sea-phrases to explain a land maneuver.

"East-south-east in line ahead until I change helm!"

"Aye, aye!"

Conops returned to the right wing. Within a minute there began one of those brilliant maneuvers that, if they succeed, are reckoned proof of military genius, but, if they fail, are denounced as rash, unmartial errors of a fool. An impossible maneuver without splendid discipline. It almost failed, because Sigurdsen hated to yield ground. Tros threw his whole line into column, Conops leading, and himself in command of the rear that had been his left wing. He outflanked the enemy's left!

The very suddenness of the maneuver threw the enemy into confusion. They found themselves, some with their

flank against the wall, some with their backs to the wall, some of them holding the line that Tros had held, and their left wing reeling, routed, as the astonishing column changed front. Their baggage-guard bolted; there was not much baggage; it was principally arrows.

Again the amazing column changed front—a mere eighty battle-weary men. Conops' golden trumpet sounded the charge and Tros led them, limping. They were into the enemy's rear before they knew what to expect. Their commander was shot down. They milled, broke, tried to retreat through the gap in the walled enclosure, throwing all the rest of the force into hopeless confusion, into which Tros' archers poured a devastating hail of captured arrows.

The one chariot that had not been sent with the reserves on that fatal encircling movement tried to escape in the direction of the Nile. Tros' archers mowed down the horses. Boidion was in the chariot—Boidion, Alexis and one other—a man in Roman equestrian uniform—a hook-nosed, mean-faced Etruscan named Lars Tarquinius.

Boidion's fan-bearers lay dead on a stricken field beside Aristobolus and a heap of dead and dying. Most of the remaining enemy scattered across the honeycomb of tombs toward the encircling column in the distance, but some threw down their arms.

No cavalry. Pursuit was impossible. There was nothing whatever that Tros could do then but set the prisoners to work to gather up his wounded, and to retire on his boats before the fleeing enemy could reach them. There were only ten blistered seamen guarding the flotilla.

It was little more than an hour since sunrise. Vultures in dozens flew down from the broken ledges of the second pyramid. In the near distance the Sphynx, half smothered in drifted sand, inscrutably suggested that there still was a problem for Tros to solve.

CHAPTER XI

"WHAT DO YOU WISH?"

ROLL-CALL. Only eight-and-eighty men left standing. Transportation for the wounded was the first problem. Memphis could look to itself; the less Memphis learned about two Arsinoes, the better. Fugitives, who had lost their claimant to the throne, and with most of their officers dead, were no danger at all. Outlaws, they would scatter, or be hunted down and executed or enslaved.

There were more than a hundred men and five chariots, with some mounted officers, still in the field as a unit, but they were several miles away and had nothing to fight for, unless they should attempt to rescue Boidion. They were far more likely to assume that Boidion was dead.

True, five chariots and a dozen mounted officers might do a good deal to harass Tros' line of retreat to the boats, but they were much more likely to save their horses for flight to preserve their own skins.

Seven Northmen dead; eleven wounded. Three decurions dead, including the gallant Thestius. Sigurdsen out of his head with wounds and melancholy, following on battle-frenzy; it was always that way with Sigurdsen after a hard fight; he had to be sung to by the skald. Too many prisoners, some of whom, however, begged to be enslaved by Tros; but some were undoubtedly getting the story of two Arsinoes, and it was not in the least improbable that one or two of them were queen's spies. She was better served by her spies than by her generals.

Prisoners were put to work to strip and bury the enemy's dead; the battlefield loot was Tros' seamen's perquisite, and they burdened themselves with plundered armor. Tros' dead were laid

in a line, in a trench that the Egyptians had dug in search of ancient tombs. And, as he had done after Salamis, he lined up the survivors for a last, farewell salute and, with his right hand raised, pronounced his blessing:

"Ye who dwell beyond the veil of death, receive these my men, who have died with their honor upon them, creditably. Give them honorable greeting, even as we, their comrades, bid their gallant souls farewell."

He had no word yet with Boidion. She and Arsinoe walked and talked together, looking strangely alike, even though the one wore armor and the other a sort of priestess' costume and a garland. Their ex-pirate escort kept at a respectful distance, separating them from Tarquinius, whose hands were tied behind him, and from Alexis, who was not bound because he was wounded.

The chariot, loaded with armor and weapons, was dragged by seamen, and Tros paid a lot of attention to it. It had given him an idea. The wounded, such as could not walk between uninjured men, were carried on the backs of prisoners, and on stretchers made of spears and reed mats taken from the Northmen's prison.

Twenty men were sent ahead in a hurry to guard the boats from fugitives. Twenty men brought up the rear, and retirement began.

It resembled defeat, not victory, but Tros knew, and all his men knew that he had saved the day for Egypt. Only Tros knew what a problem he had yet to solve. He walked alone, unarmored, switching flies and limping, leaving the command to Conops, who had caught an officer's gray nag and was clowning the part of a Roman general on parade.

They were not pursued, and there was not much fighting near the boats, although a group of fugitives did try to rush one boat and make away with it. Tros took his entire force and all his prisoners across the river, and sent a messenger at once up-river to the temple to command the priests to come and care for his wounded, on pain of having their temple burned and laid waste.

He set the prisoners to work to build a reed encampment, counted Arsinoe's camels, checked her supplies, and then sent four more boats up-river with a demand on the priests for provisions for a week for his entire force. Then he questioned Arsinoe's slaves; and at last, seated on a camel-saddle beneath a hurriedly constructed bower of reeds, with one of Arsinoe's slaves to flick the flies away, he sent for Boidion.

She stood smiling at him, Arsinoe to the life except for a vaguely absent element of self-assurance. The queen's and Arsinoe's grandmother had been a Jewess; the coincidence of likeness was astonishing, but not, after all, such a miracle. This girl could have easily passed for Cleopatra's sister, although she and Arsinoe were much more beautiful than the queen, as well as taller and with far less prominent noses.

Tros ordered another camel-saddle to be brought, that she might be seated. He gave her a fly-switch, that she might be at ease. Then he asked her, suddenly:

"Have you counted the number of men who have died for your false adventure?"

"No, Lord Tros." Her face changed. She appeared now to expect to be executed out of hand.

He paused, affording her full opportunity to excuse herself or to explain, if she should see fit. But she was silent.

"Was it your fault?" he demanded.

"Yes. I did it. It was not my own idea. It was suggested to me. But I did it. Who wouldn't snatch at a throne, if the chance were offered? But for the stroke of a scribe's pen, I, too, am a Ptolemy."

"You have taken another's name," said Tros, and he made his voice sound stern because he was not yet sure of that other's spirit, nor sure that he might not

have to drag this girl to Alexandria to measure the queen's mercy; and he wanted to arouse no false hope. "How can you restore her name to her, you having so misused it?"

"Does she want it?" Boidion retorted. "Have you asked her?"

"No. But I will."

He requested Arsinoe's presence; so they brought another camel-saddle, and she came and sat facing Boidion, wearing a plain Greek *amorgina* of such fine, bleached flax that it resembled silk. It was of the latest court fashion. She had very evidently had the pick of Esias' imported merchandise, had good needlewomen with her, and was not inclined to appear before Tros at a disadvantage. She smiled at Boidion, with malice but without any trace of contempt.

"This girl—" Tros began.

"My father's daughter," said Arsinoe.

"Boidion," said Tros, "has assumed your name."

"So I am nameless!"

"Do you wish it? You are Queen of Cyprus."

"I have told you, and again I say it, I am sick of being Queen of Cyprus. Never again will I go to Cyprus. Never. I have been a plaything of the vilest traitors that ever bought and sold each other, and themselves and their powerless victim. So, if this fool wishes to be Queen of Cyprus, let her be it!"

Tros prodded the earth with his sword. He stared at Boidion. Suddenly he asked her:

"Woman, you have taken one step. Will you take the other, and the consequences? Or will you plead for the Queen's mercy?"

Boidion answered:

"You have heard her speak; and she said it to me when we walked together. I am as much a Ptolemy as she is, and perhaps more capable of being queen, since she seems to have had small pleasure of it, and no profit."

Tros met Arsinoe's eyes again.

"You yield your throne?"

"I have thrown it away, for any fool to have who craves it!"

"You yield your name?"

"It is stolen. Let her have it. I will choose a new name."

He stared at Boidion, considering her, and then pronounced his verdict:

"Queen of Cyprus then you shall be, and Arsinoe you are, from this day forward; and the consequences be on your head. Never again answer to the name of Boidion! You hear me?"

"If I am a queen, you should address me more respectfully," she answered.

TROS smiled. He commanded the Etruscan to be brought before him; he came with his hands still tied behind his back, between two seamen. They had taken away his helmet, but he looked rather spruce in his Roman uniform—lean, mean, avaricious, but possessed of a kind of courage. He kept shaking his head to shake off flies. Tros ordered his hands loosened and a fly-switch given to him. He looked at neither woman—looked straight at Tros, sly-eyed and daring.

"Lars Tarquinius, you are a treacherous, faithless, unscrupulous, lying scoundrel."

"Have I ever pretended to you to be anything else?" Tarquinius answered. "You may as well omit the Ciceronian oration, Captain Tros. You have a use for me, or you would have ordered me killed and thrown to the crocodiles. What is it? Or have I come to hear sentence of death? It wouldn't be like you to waste a sensible man like me."

"You were left in Cyprus, in command of the Queen of Cyprus' bodyguard," said Tros, "and with authority from Cassius and Brutus, conferred upon you by the Roman admiral Ahenobarbus, to advise the queen how to conduct her affairs. You will return to Cyprus, taking the Queen of Cyprus with you."

"How? When?"

"Now. And by use of your ingenuity." Tros gestured toward Boidion. "Present your respects to Queen Arsinoe of Cyprus!"

Lars Tarquinius gaped. Even he, past-master spy, opportunist, agent of sedition and secret treasons, was too astonished for speech. Then a smile stole over his hungry face.

"Our respects," he said, "I think are due to Captain Tros. But—who shall guarantee us that this other, who so resembles her"—for the first time he glanced at Arsinoe—"will not—"

"I will guarantee your death," Tros interrupted, "if I ever hear of you mentioning this lady, whom you have never seen, nor ever knew, and even of whose name you are ignorant! You left Cyprus, in a design on the throne of Egypt, with that princess with whom you will now return to Cyprus, having failed of your purpose. For the rest, silence!"

Tarquinius gulped. Tros commanded the Lord Alexis to be brought in, and he came with his hand on a seaman's shoulder, looking gray-lipped and crestfallen.

"You deceived me, Tros!" he began bitterly.

"Do you wish to go to the queen? I will not deceive you about that, if you would like to offer her your felicitations."

Alexis avoided the eyes of the women. He glanced at Tarquinius, who made no sign whatever.

"Do you wish me to plead for your mercy?" he asked then, staring straight at Tros. "If you will spare my life, I will forever be your grateful client."

"Shake hands with your ally Tarquinius!" Tros answered. "Make your bow to your new queen! You are to go with her to Cyprus. There are camels waiting. Doubtless there are prisoners who are willing to make the journey with you; you may choose from among them as many as there are camels to carry them. You and they may have weapons, and I will supply provisions."

"I have no money," Alexis answered.

"You have an order on the queen's treasury, haven't you? Use that. I am not your banker."

"It is worth my life to use that."

"Die then! You have cost me more good men than your convenience is worth. I have nothing to add, beyond that you may have your luggage; I will tell the priests to bring it."

Boidion smiled at Arsinoe:

"And what will you do?"

"I will pity you!" she answered.

At a gesture from Tros the seaman touched Tarquinius' shoulder. Boidion caught Tros' eye. He nodded, and she went out with Alexis. Except for the slave who plied the fly-switch he was alone with a girl who had thrown away throne and name. He knew why she had thrown them away.

She had placed herself utterly in his power, and to befriend her would be treason against Cleopatra, as Arsinoe well knew. But she seemed unafraid, confident. They were silent about twenty switches of the slave's arm. Then it was she who broke the silence:

"So you see, I can't get killed in battle."

"I will speak with my man Conops," he answered.

She mocked him:

"Don't order him to kill me. Do it yourself!"

"I will come to your tent."

"And kill me?"

"Go and wait for me," he answered.

The slave followed her to her tent, and in a few minutes Conops came.

"The priests are here, master. Eight of 'em, hairless as sharks. They've turned to with the wounded. May I fetch one to dress that scratched leg?"

"Later. Little man—"

"O Apollo, I know what's coming! Not the woman, master! You and I, since you were knee-high to your father's cabin-lad, we've got on famous without tying up to women. 'Time we had a woman, we were in and out o' trouble like a pair o' soldiers at sea!"

"You dock-side lecher! You shameless

brothel-rat! You impudent, ignorant drunkard!"

"Yes, master."

"You presume to criticize me?"

"No, no. But as I was saying—"

"Pipe down!"

"Aye, aye, master."

"I go alone to Alexandria."

"Alone?"

"Oh, I will take two of the Jews and a boat-crew. You are to take the flotilla down the eastern branch of the Nile to Pelusium, and await me there. The ladies—"

"You mean the Queen Arsinoe?"

"She is not a queen."

"Then the princess."

"She is not a princess. I will give her a new name."

"Chronos!"

"I will name her Hero. Henceforth you will know her by no other name."

"Aye, aye, master."

"She and her two women are the wives of Memphis merchants, visiting Esias' partner's wife in Pelusium. You know Esias' partner. You will take a letter to him, from me. Do as he tells you, even if he should order you all into hiding until after I have cleared up matters with the Queen of Egypt."

"Watch out, master! Cleopatra's a woman. She's jealous. She has her spies everywhere; she'll know what we've been up to. She's as like as not to hand you over to the rack-and-pincer-crew, to be finished off."

"Has she a use for me dead, do you think? Little man, the queen has too few friends to kill men who can not be bought to betray her. Have you understood your orders?"

"Aye, aye, master."

Tros let a priest come and bandage his leg. Then he bathed in the river, talked with the wounded, inspected the camp, checked the provisions the priests had brought, and at last reached Arsinoe's tent. She arose beneath the awning and stood waiting for him.

"Well, girl?"

"Lord Captain?"

"What shall I do with you?"

"What do you wish?"

"I name you Hero."

And—?"

He and she entered the tent. One of her women closed the flap behind them, smiling, and then ran, because Conops pelted her away with lumps of hard Nile mud.

CHAPTER XII

"EGYPT'S NEED."

ALEXANDRIA lay serene and lovely beneath the midnight moon. From the queen's balcony there was a view of the whole harbor and half of the city. The great Pharos beacon glowed like a ruby, and the anchored shipping seemed a-swim in a silvered lake. Over to the westward, at the shoreward end of the flickering lights of Rhakotis, were two big basket-flares that Tros knew were the watch-lights where his trireme lay awaiting orders for repairs.

The queen rebuked him for pacing the balcony.

"You irritate me. And besides, your leg is not yet healed. Be seated."

"Egypt—"

"So you say they fled by camel. On whose camels?"

"How should I know?" He was growing angry. He had answered her questions again and again. "Perhaps somebody in Memphis."

"I have laid a fine on Memphis that will not encourage them to play again with treason! Why did you send all your men to Pelusium?"

He looked hard at her, and his eyes were as steady as hers. He lied, and she knew he was lying, and he meant that she should:

"To keep my Northmen out of mischief. They are angry that you sent them to a prison-camp merely because they broke the heads of men who spoke loosely of you."

"And you can't control them? I could. Who are the women who availed themselves of your men's escort? The women who are now in Pelusium? I have heard there are three."

"Merchants' wives," he answered.

"Oh?"

"Yes."

"Whose wife is the one named Hero?"

"Egypt, there are questions that are best unasked." He stood up. "I have saved your throne. I have done your errand. Now keep your promise."

"I am grateful, even though you do so curiously harbor—an unknown woman," she answered. Suddenly her voice changed. "I sent you to kill! Instead, you say, you say, you say you sent Arsinoe back to Cyprus! You have taken your Northmen without my leave. And in Pelusium you have a woman! A woman named Hero! Oh, my spies are awake, though my generals sleep!"

"Egypt, I hold your promise. No, no! It was Cleopatra's promise. I have done my duty by you. It is time now for me to repair my trireme, and to set sail on the voyage of which you know."

"With this woman named Hero?"

Suddenly he noticed she was smiling. She was gazing westward toward Rhakotis, and her smile was triumphant.

Tros turned and followed her gaze. Where the basket-flares had glowed on the throat of night there was now a billowing holocaust—a black cloud, red-lit from beneath by a burning hull, high on the ways at Esias' wharf. It was too far away for the roar of the flames to be heard, but a mast fell and the sparks volcanoed skyward as Tros watched, and he could see the phantom figures of his seamen, or perhaps Esias' slave-gangs, beating out sparks on the warehouse roofs.

"What burns?" asked Cleopatra.

Tros met her eyes in silence.

"Your trireme?"

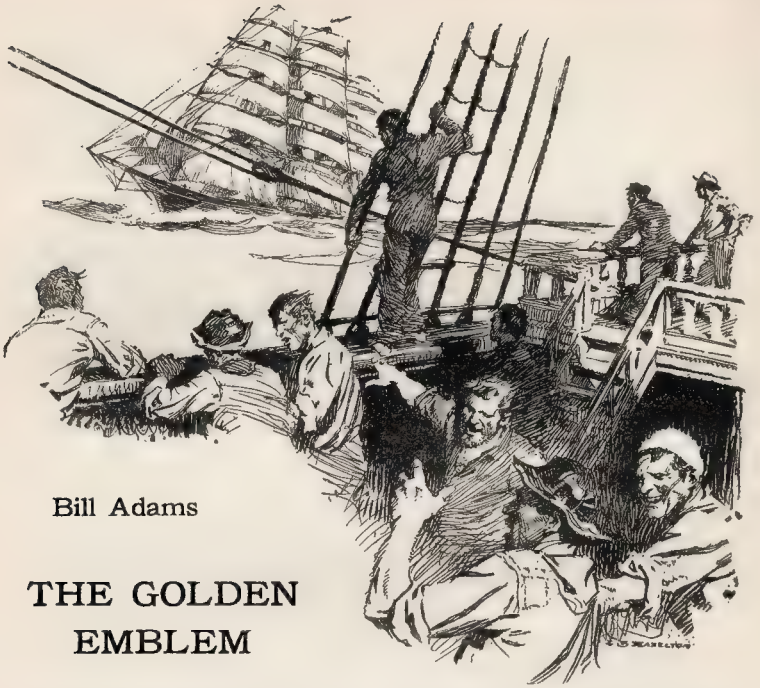
He nodded, not trusting himself to speak.

"Dreadful. Oh well, one can build another ship. There are also other women!"

"Cleopatra's promise!" he said grimly.

"Egypt's need!" she answered. "If the woman in Pelusium is who I think she is, nothing less than your obedience to me can save both of you from death for treason! Oh yes, you may go and watch your ship burn. Come and tell me about it tomorrow. There is a task I will ask you to undertake."

THE END



Bill Adams

THE GOLDEN EMBLEM

SHE was bluff in the bow. She was square-sterned. She was flat-bottomed. Her sides were like walls. She steered ill. She rolled drunkenly. She waddled like an old washerwoman who has borne very many children. There was no grace in her. Having completed her building, her builder fuddled his brain with rum. He named her while in his cups.

"I don't like her name," said the merchant who bought her for a song after she had sailed the seas for many years. "I'll change it.

"No, I'll leave it stand," said the merchant, staring at the faded lettering. "To change a ship's name brings her bad luck, they say." The captain of a swift clipper, passing, overheard the words.

"Leave her name stand," said the clipper captain, laughing. "It's a fine name and it's all that looks well about the old hooker." The merchant let it stand.

She carried a captain, two mates, a carpenter, a steward, cook, and a dozen able seaman—simple men with furrowed, sea-tanned faces and windy eyes. Some were old, some young. Some bearded, some smooth-faced.

She left the Chincha islands on a blazing day, overloaded because of the greed of her owner; her holds filled with guano—with the dry droppings of ten hundred million sea fowl. Her decks were deep in guano dust. Her masts, spars, rigging, rails were heavily coated with it. The faces of her people, their hands, their clothing, were thick with the dry dust.

Trying to break her anchor from the sea bottom, her seamen grunted.

"It's stuck in bird dung," said one.

"She's a stinking ship," said another.

"Wi' a stinkin' crew," said another. Every one laughed.

"Heave! Heave, and get that anchor in!" said the mate.

"I sailed in a ship as carried spices once," said one of the crew.

"I sailed in the tea clippers," said another.

"Quit talking. Save your breath. Heave and break that anchor away!" said the mate. "Sing! Sing a chantey, some one!"

"Ow's a man to sing wi' his throat full of guano, sir?" asked a sailor, and again every one laughed.

Clank,—clank,—clank, went the windlass pawls, the windlass revolving slowly as they heaved. The anchor lifted clear of the sea bottom.

"Run her up now, sons!" said the mate. "Let's get her away!"

They ran, trotting slowly round and round the windlass.

"Who give this here ship her name, sir?" asked a sailor.

"Wot's a emblem, sir?" asked another.

"A golden emblem! Aye—wot's that, sir?" asked another.

"Never mind what her name means. Let's get her started home," said the mate.

"Where's she bound for, sir?" asked one.

"Falmouth," said the mate.

"Wait till we gets to Falmouth. There's good beer in Falmouth," said one.

"We ain't there yet," said another.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed an old fellow, laughing with a throaty cackle.

"Run! Run her up, sons!" said the mate. They ran, faster, their feet kicking up dust. *Clank, clank, clank,* went the windlass pawls.

"Loose the topsails! A man to the wheel!" said the mate when the anchor was up.

"Homeward bound in the *Golden Emblem,*" shouted a young fellow, leaping into the rigging to go up and loose a topsail. "Cripey, but she's a dirty old tub," he said to himself, his hands, his feet scattering thick dust from the rigging.

"Look at the dust fall from that there topsail!" said a man on deck.

"There's bird dung down me neck," said another.

"Go below for breakfast," said the mate when the topsails were set, the old bark just moving in a faint hot air.

They sat in the dusty fo'c's'le, munching hardtack, drinking bitter coffee from a dirty, dented old tin pot.

"It's most blasted hot," said one.

"It's always blasted hot at them there Chinchas," said another. "We have been her nigh seven weeks a' loadin' of her. Y'ought to be used to it."

"My cawfee tastes a' guano," said one.

"So does the hardtack," said another.

"It's an old story, ain't it? Wot ye kickin' about?" asked another.

"Who's kickin'? D'you like the taste of guano?" asked the other.

"Lot's o' good beer i' Falmouth, boys."

"We ain't there yet," said another.

"Haw, haw, haw! Not by a sight we ain't," laughed an old fellow.

"Breakfast done, they lit their pipes. A young fellow spat.

"Coffee, hardtack, baccy—all tastes alike," said he.

"Turn to! Loose all sail and let's get her away!" cried the mate at the fo'c's'le door.

"If a man could raise a sweat, 'e'd not feel so 'ot," said one.

"We're all dried out," said another. "Seven weeks at the Chinchas loadin' guano!"

"What are you men kicking about all the time?" asked the mate.

"We ain't kickin', sir. We was just sayin' as we was tired o' bird dung," said one.

"We'll wash her down as soon as sail's on her," said the mate.

"It'd take old Noah's flood to wash her clean, sir," said one.

"Wait till we gets to the Horn! That'll wash her," said another.

"I wisht as we was there," said a young fellow with a smooth face.

"You wait till we gets there! Haw, haw, haw!" laughed an old fellow.

"Quit talking. Never mind the Horn!" said the mate.

"The mate says to never mind the Horn, boys," laughed one.

"There'll be wind enough there wi'out ours," said a man.

"Haw, haw, haw! That's a good one!" laughed an old gray-bearded man. Another laughed. Laughter, mocking laughter, came from a dozen pairs of lips.

The mate went up to the poop, where stood the skipper. "We've got a good crew, mister," said the skipper.

"Yes, sir. They can always raise a laugh," said the mate.

The skipper, his eyes on the bark's name on a lifebuoy, thought, "I wish she was in Falmouth."

Having set sail, they washed the decks down. As, having put away the brooms and buckets, they came back to the deck, a puff of wind came; it flapped the sails full and died instantly. From the sails, a cloud of guano dust drifted to the deck, covering it with a reeking gray film. Astern lay the Chinchas, fading very slowly from view. Ahead, a glazed horizon glimmered; beyond, a glazed hot sea. The bells struck for midday. A sailor went to the cook's galley for dinner.

"I 'opes there ain't no guano in the pea soup, doctor. We're tired o' guano soup," he said to the cook.

"You'll 'ave to be tired, then," said the cook.

"You could keep your door shut, and keep the dust out, doctor," said the sailor.

"An' get roasted alive in 'ere, eh?" asked the cook.

FOR twenty degrees of latitude, for twelve hundred miles, the bark sailed slowly, day by day, night by night, in tiny tropic airs, over a glazed sea toward a glazed horizon—her sails scarce ever full; the bubbles rippling slowly past her sides—sails, ropes, rigging, masts, spars, thick with gray dust that fell in a cloud to the decks each time they tightened the braces and halliards at morning and evening. Day by day the pitch bubbled from her deck seams. Morning, noon, night, they flung seawater on her decks to swell the seams.

After more than three weeks the sky grew beclouded. A drizzle fell. A brisk wind rose. The bark rolled, her bows squatting heavily down on the seas. Losing his footing on the slimy deck, a sailor fell. Rising, he said, "I don't want to never see no more sea birds." Look at the slime a' flowin' from the riggin' an' drippin' on the deck. Ugh!"

"You'll be a sea bird yerself w'en yer dead," said another.

"Aye. We'll all be sea birds w'en we're dead," said another. "That's wot 'appens to dead sailors."

"We ain't dead yet," said another.

"Mister mate, how many mugs o' Falmouth beer could ye drink, sir?" asked one.

"Quit thinking of beer. Get on with your work," said the mate. "Get her gear in good shape for the Horn!"

The breeze freshened. The bark wallowed on, her crew all busy in her slippery rigging.

It was morning. The sun hung low and black above the rolling mastheads. Under topsails and courses, her topgallants and royals furled, the bark staggered southward, pushing the sea from her bluff bows, rolling so that the water gurgled in at her scupper holes and flowed to and fro on her deck. Presently rain fell. A drowning torrent that ran down her rigging, washing away the last of the guano dust.

"It's coming cold," said a sailor.

"It'll be cold, you bet," said another. "This ain't nothing yet. She's steering east by south, for the Horn."

"It wasn't no fun in them Chinchas," said one, "but it'll be fun in Falmouth."

"Haw, haw, haw! We ain't there yet," laughed an old fellow, with a throaty cackle.

"I wish I was mate in a tea clipper. They don't overload the tea clippers," said the mate to himself.

"What are the men laughing about, mister?" asked the skipper.

"God knows, sir. They're always laughing at something or other," said the mate.

"Laughter's good. Let them laugh," murmured the skipper, his eyes on the bark's name on a lifebuoy.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. The bark had all sail furled but her four topsails. An inky sky closed above her rolling mastheads. Her bulwarks dipped, first on one, then on the other side, till they dipped under the sea; her decks were aswirl with foamy white water.

"First you roasts and then you freezes," said a sailor, munching hard-tack and sipping bitter coffee from a dirty old tin pot in the fo'c's'le. "I'd sooner be a dog."

"All sailors is dogs. Wot ye kickin' about?" said another.

"Fore topsail downhaul!" shouted the mate at their door.

"*Hi—lee-oh!—Haul-away-oh!*" cried a a sailor, singing out that all might pull together on the topsail downhaul.

"Aloft and make it fast!" ordered the mate when the sail was down. They swarmed into the rigging, in oilskins and seaboots. A few snow flakes fell.

"We must be off the Horn, sir," said a young fellow to the second mate beside him on the footrope.

"Two more days yet," said the second mate.

"Cripey! It ain't goin' to get no colder, is it?" asked the young fellow. An old gray man laughed.

"*That's the way we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots!*" they sang, clawing at the snow-covered canvas with bare, cold hands.

Two days were gone. It was evening. Sea and sky were black and thunderous. Ice on the rigging, the sails, the spars. Snow and spray frozen on the quivering shrouds. They sat in the fo'c's'le, smoking black bassy, while outside the sea raged, the wind roaring in a steady, ceaseless monotone.

A sailor rose, drew on his mittens, and left to go to the wheel. In a minute the man whom he had relieved entered the fo'c's'le.

"How is it on deck?" asked one, as he beat his cold hands on his sides.

"Hark to that? D'ye hear *that?*" said another.

"*Ice about?*" asked another, looking up at the man from the wheel.

"Pancake ice all round her. We come into it a few minutes back," said the man from the wheel. "That's the cakes a-clinkin' against each other."

"Cripey, I 'opes as there ain't goin' to be no bergs," said another.

"I seed one berg, a bit ago. A big un," said the man from the wheel.

"Ow's she steerin'?" asked one.

"Like an old cow whale wot's had a fin cut off on one side. I couldn't hardly hold her. Me arms and me shoulders aches," said the man from the wheel.

"Another man to the wheel!" shouted the mate, looking in on them.

"If it was beer, now, I'd want mine hot, sir," said a sailor, looking up at the mate.

"Hot beer! Haw, haw, haw!" laughed an old fellow.

"Keep handy, all of you. Don't take your oilskins or seaboots off," said the mate. "When she gets to Falmouth you can have all the hot beer you want."

"Ha, ha, ha!" they laughed. "The mate says we can have all the hot beer we want."

"How're the men, mister?" asked the

skipper when the mate came up to the poop.

"They're laughing about hot beer, sir," said the mate.

"Good. As long as they can laugh the ship's all right," thought the skipper.

At the wheel two helmsmen strained, holding the wallowing bark to her course in fast gathering darkness.

IT WAS midnight. The mate's watch, on duty since eight o'clock, were turning into their bunks, their oilskins and seaboots on. The second mate's men were lighting their pipes, on duty now till four of the morning.

"Keep handy, boys!" said the second mate, looking in on them.

"We're all handy, sir," said one.

"And colder'n hell, sir," said another.

"There's bergs about," said the second mate, and was gone.

The moon rose, giving a faint light through the dense clouds. The wind, fallen a little now, moaned. The sea moaned. Water gurgled to and fro on the deck as the bark rolled. Icicles glimmered dimly on the rigging.

The lookout man's voice rang, high and sudden, from the fo'c's'le head. *"Ice right ahead, sir!"*

The second mate's men, hearing that cry, ran to the deck. Wakened by that cry, the mate's men leapt from their bunks and followed.

"Hard up the helm!" came the skipper's loud shout to the helmsmen. "Up with the braces! Look alive!" he shouted to the mate.

"Hawl-away-oh—Hi—leeee—oh! Hi—leee—oh! cried a sailor, singing out that all might pull together.

Sluggishly, her bluff bows slatting heavily down upon the tumbled seas, the bark paid off, her wall sides rolling, the water gurgling all across her decks.

"Watch out for yourselves! It's going to foul the yards!" shouted the mate, as the moon rose, breaking through a cloud rift, gleamed on a great berg close down on the bow.

Its yard fouling a huge, overhanging ice cliff that projected from the berg, the fore topgallant mast crashed down. The main followed instantly, carrying away the topsail and the lower braces. Smashing a great gap in the bulwarks to starboard, a mass of ice fell and slipped overboard through the gap as the bark rolled. Hiding the berg, hiding the hanging wreckage, the moon went in.

"Get that wreckage cleared away! All hands!" shouted the skipper.

"Now how'd you like a mug o' hot beer?" came a voice from the murk.

"Haw, haw, haw!" came throaty laughter from the murk.

"Quit your laughing! Look alive with that wreckage!" shouted the mate.

"We're lookin' alive, sir," came a reply from the murk, "we was only sayin' as we'd like a mug o' hot beer, sir!"

In the darkness on his poop, the skipper smiled.

"She'll be all right," he murmured.

Till dawn all hands—men, mates, cook, steward, carpenter—toiled at clearing the wreckage, at reeving off new topsail and new course braces. With dawn snow fell, great flakes that drifted slowly on the fallen wind and hid the sea.

"Doctor, go make coffee," said the mate to the cook at dawn.

Gathered in the fo'c's'le the men sipped bitter coffee from tin pannikins.

"Here's how, sir!" said an old fellow, lifting his pannikin to the mate.

"Drink hearty, son!" said the mate, grinning, drinking from the dirty dented tin pot himself, and passing it on to the second mate, who passed it to the carpenter, who drank and passed it to the steward.

The skipper looked in.

"Every one all right?" he asked, gazing from one to another.

"We're pretendin' as we're 'avin' a drink o' Falmouth beer, sir," said an old fellow, grinning up at the skipper from under shaggy brows.

A young man asked, "Will you take her to the Falklands for repair, sir?"

The skipper beckoned the mate out to the deck. "What do you think, mister?" he asked. "If we go to the Falklands for repairs we'll have to be there a long time. If we take her on as she is, crippled aloft, we shall make a very long voyage. Whichever we do, I think that we shall reach Falmouth at much the same time."

"Whatever you say suits me, sir," said the mate.

"What about the crew, mister?" the skipper asked.

"*And that's the way we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots*" came, in a sudden burst of uproarious song and laughter, from the fo'c's'le. The mate looked, smiling, at the skipper, implying that the skipper had his answer.

"Very well, mister," said the skipper, a look of relief on his face. "As soon as they've had breakfast and some rest set the foresail and mainsail. We'll go to Falmouth."

The mate looked into the fo'c's'le.

"When you've had enough rest, loose the foresail and mainsail, sons!" said he.

"Are we goin' to them Falklands, sir?" asked a sailor.

"We're going to Falmouth," replied the mate.

The men lept to their feet, cheering, and started out to set the sails.

"Take your rest, sons! Take your rest!" said the mate.

"Falmouth beer, my bullies!" cried a young fellow, leaping into the shrouds, paying no heed to the mate.

Stamping cold feet, beating their hands on their sides, the crew talked of Falmouth and of beer.

"*Oh, do, my Johnnie Boker! Come, rock and roll me over!*" they sang, sheeting the sails home.

All morning it snowed—huge flakes that hid the sea. All morning the crippled bark crept on, her crew building a makeshift bulwark to take the place of the bulwark the ice had wrecked. At noon they rested and ate salt pork.

"It tastes kind of queer," said one.

"It's tasted kind of queer a long time," said another.

"We was seven weeks under the sun in them Chinchas, and we was a long time a'crawlin' down the tropics. The pork's got spoiled," said another.

"If we'd gone to them Falklands we'd ha' got fresh stores," said another.

"Wot ye kickin' about?" asked another.

"Who's kickin'? I ain't a-kickin'," retorted the other.

THE bark was rolling slowly up a light southeast trade wind, her sails barely filled. Since the loss of the topgallant masts two full months had dragged by. Only once had the wind amounted to more than a light air. That once it had blown hard from dead ahead for two full weeks, driving her off her course, her clumsy old hull making little else but leeway because she lacked enough sail for driving her into the wind.

"It's gettin' warmer every day," said a sailor.

"An' the pork's a' gettin' ranker every day," said another.

"Wait till she's well up in the tropics," said another.

"Rye!—S'pose as we gets becalmed on the line, eh?" another said.

It was evening. The last of the southeast trade had died away the previous night. All day the bark had lain in a flat calm, with the sun overhead, on the line. The pitch bubbled up from her deck seams. Morning, noon and evening they had slapped sea water on her decks to swell the seams. Now they were eating hardtack with a smear of marmalade on it, drinking bitter coffee from a dented, dirty old tin pot. At noon they had eaten spoiled pork and salty pea soup. Over a hundred and twenty days were gone since they had left the Chinchas. They were lean as staves. The mates, the steward, cook, carpenter, and skipper were lean as staves.

" 'Ow'd a good swig o' beer go now, eh?" asked a sailor.

"Beer your eye!" exclaimed another. " 'Ow'd a good drink of good *water* go, wot?"

The mate, having sounded the fresh water tank, went to the skipper on the poop.

"We'll have to cut down the water allowance more still, sir," he said. "The tank's almost empty."

"Maybe it'll rain and we shall be able to fill it," said the skipper, a frown on his face, his eyes perplexed and well nigh desperate.

"Yes, sir—maybe," said the mate.

For twelve days the bark lay in a flat calm. Water enough to keep her people alive. No more. All day they chewed buttons cut from their dungarees, to keep the saliva flowing a little; they watched the glazed horizon for a cloud.

"If we'd gone to them Falklands, we'd not be 'arf dead now," said a thirsty sailor.

"We're only 'arf dead. Wot ye kickin' about?" said another.

"W'oo's kickin'? I ain't kickin'!" said the other.

"Beer! A mug o' good cold beer in a Falmouth pub!" said one.

"Quit talkin' about cold beer!" exclaimed another. Every one laughed, a dry throaty cackle.

At dawn a black cloud appeared on the sea rim. They stretched the rain-sail, made it fast in both sides of the main rigging, led its canvas spout down into the water tank. While the black cloud crept slowly over the glazed sky they stripped their dungarees from their lean shoulders. Naked, they watched the oncoming cloud.

"Hark at the rain a' hissin'," said one.

"It's a solid wall, ain't it?" said another.

"I wisht as it was beer," said another. Every one laughed, a dry throaty cackle.

They lay on their backs on the deck, their mouths wide open to catch the cool rain. They rolled over and over, stretched their refreshed limbs. They played leapfrog in the torrent, slapping each other's bare buttocks, and shouting with laughter.

The rain passed on. The tank was full. A little breeze ruffled the glazed tropic sea. They put their dungarees on. For a few moments their dungarees, the sails, the decks steamed; they were dry.

"Take off the hatch, mister," said the skipper. "We'll lighten her. We'll dump some of the cargo to the sea."

Working in a blazing sun, in a cloud of dense gray dust, they threw guano to the sea all day. Dust settled thick on the sails, the spars, the deck, the rigging.

At dinner time the cook said, "I can't 'elp 'ow the grub tastes. It's that there guano dust."

A sailor eating dinner in the fo'c's'le said, "The pork don't taste no wuss than yesterday. Blame me if it don't taste maybe a bit better, eh?" Every one laughed.

For two days they dumped guano to the sea. The skipper and mate, looking over the side, watched the bubbles that drifted lazily by the bark's wall sides.

The skipper said, "Look at the length of the seaweed on her sides below the water line! Look at the barnacles! Her bottom's so foul she couldn't make more than four miles an hour with a gale at her tail!"

A sailor entering the fo'c's'le said, "Poor old lady. She's got a dirty bottom, me byes!"

"That ain't no way to talk about no lady," said another. Every one laughed.

"Cripey!" exclaimed a young fellow, looking from the fo'c's'le, "here's a school o' porpoises comin' to play under the bow."

"Sir," said an old gray man to the mate, "If the carpenter was to make a harpoon I could harpoon one o' them porpus. I was in a whaler once."

"Chips, can you make a harpoon?" the mate asked the carpenter.

"I can make anything, sir," said Chips. And soon the old gray fellow sat astride the boom, a harpoon poised in his wrinkled hand.

For a week all hands ate their fill of porpoise meat; dark red flesh tasting something not unlike beef steak. Said the old gray man, "We ain't a' goin' to git scurvy for a time leastways, boys!"

The bark was wallowing up the western ocean, making four miles an hour in a stiff quartering wind. Leaning on her rail, all hands watched a tall three skysail yarder coming up astern, white water breaking in great clouds of spray from her driving bows, her lee rail lying down to the sea.

"What's she signaling, mister?" asked the skipper.

"She wants to know if we need any assistance, sir," said the mate.

"Ask her if she can spare us a couple of barrels of fresh pork," said the skipper.

The mate said, presently, "She's almost out of stores, sir. She can't spare any at all."

The skipper called the crew to the quarterdeck.

"Her bottom's getting fouler every day, men," he said. "We may be sixty days getting to Falmouth. You may get scurvy. Do any of you want to abandon ship?"

An old gray fellow looked up and replied, "We ain't got scurvy yet, sir."

The skipper said, "Thank you, men. I'd like to take her in if we anyhow can."

"We'll take her in, and then we'll all 'ave a good swig o' Falmouth beer, sir," said the other gray fellow. A cheer rose from the crew, and loud rollicking laughter.

"Think it over while you have the chance, men," said the skipper. "There may be no other chance. We may meet no other ship."

"To hell wid other ships, sir!" cried a young fellow, "We stays wid th' old *Golden Emblem,* sir!"

THE bark was tacking to and fro in a stiff wind from dead ahead, from northeast, making little but leeway because of her foul bottom and crippled tophamper. She had been tacking to and fro for nigh a full month. They had seen no more porpoises, no other ship. The mate came to the skipper on the poop.

"Two of them have scurvy, sir," he said.

"Look 'ere, sons," said a sailor in the fo'c's'le, and poked a finger into his forearm. When he took it away, the hole it had made remained.

"Look at me gums, byes," said another; raising his upper lip, he showed a black gum.

"We could 'ave abandoned her," said one. "Then we'd not be 'avin' no scurvy now."

"Wot ye kickin' about?" asked another.

"Who's kickin'? I ain't kickin'!" said the other.

Night set in, bringing a thick mist that hid all things a few feet from the wallowing bark. A vessel could pass a hundred feet away and not be seen. For three days the wet mist hid the sea. Late in the fourth night the lookout man shouted clear and high, "Ship two points on the port bow, sir!"

All hands ran to the deck, to see a red and green light coming out of the mist.

"Down helm!" shouted the skipper to the man at the wheel.

"Down helm it is, sir!" said the man at the wheel. And then, "She's steerin' like a wash tub, sir. She don't pay off!"

"Stand clear all hands!" shouted the mate. There was a loud splintering crash forward. The other ship had struck the bark a glancing blow, brought her fore topmast down, and gone clear.

"She's holed forward, sir," said the mate.

"Man the pumps, mister!" said the skipper.

Clank, clank, clank, came the creak of the pumps. All night the watch on deck pumped, the water flowing in as fast as they could pump it out.

"If it wasn't for the scurvy—if they weren't so weak—they could keep the water down, sir," said the mate. "We can't spare any one to clear the wrecked topmast."

"Lash it so it can't roll about, and leave it hang, mister. She'll crawl like a snail now, more than ever."

At dawn the skipper called all hands to the quarterdeck.

"If we take to the boats some ship's sure to pick us up. We're in the track of ships," he told them.

"Does *you* want to abandon her, sir?" asked a voice from the mist below him.

The skipper made no answer. From the thick mist there came the sound of a low laugh.

"Lots o' good beer in Falmouth, sir!" a voice called. The laugh spread, from man to man, a hoarse ripple of amused defiance. The watch on deck returned to the pumps.

Twenty-four hours dragged on. The mate said, "The water's gaining on them, sir. They're too weak."

A squall whined over the mist-hid sea. The bark began to roll heavily.

"It's going to blow. We can't leave her now. The boats couldn't live. We must stay till she sinks beneath us. Order all hands to the pumps, mister!" said the skipper.

"They're all at the pumps, sir. They didn't wait for orders," said the mate.

All day all hands pumped, the bark rolled drunkenly, creeping along like a crippled snail, the water gaining inch by inch. Two men at the wheel; no one man was strong enough to hold her now.

"We're all goin' to git drownded, boys!" said a voice from the murk.

"We ain't drownded yet. Wot ye kickin' about?" came instant reply.

"All the way from the Chinchas to get a bottle o' Falmouth beer!" called a hoarse voice. Some one laughed. Hoarse, unhopeful—yet defiant.

"They can still laugh. I wish I could," thought the skipper.

All night, all day, all night again, they pumped. Next dawn the mist thinned. Just visible in the dim light, land lay ahead. The bark was far below her Plimsoll mark, the water gaining.

A ship came driving up from astern, flew a hurried signal.

"She's asking if we want to abandon her, men!" called the skipper.

From the pumps, a sailor called huskily, "Tell her to go to hell, sir!"

The other ship drove on, cheering as she passed. Scarce heard by those upon her decks, a feeble cheer replied.

The sun rose. The wind ceased.

Clank, clank, clank, on and on, unceasing, from the creaking pumps, the old bark crawling like a crippled snail.

In Falmouth harbor the mate lowered her topsails, let her fore and main sheets go and dropped her anchor, while the men still pumped. Tugs came speeding toward her. Men leapt lightly over her low rails and ran to her pumps.

The old bark's sailors fell, lay and sat, exhausted, on her decks.

A bumboatman came aboard, his arms filled with fresh meat and vegetables. The bark's sailors munched, lying and sitting, exhausted, on her deck.

Another bumboatman came aboard, his arms full of bottles.

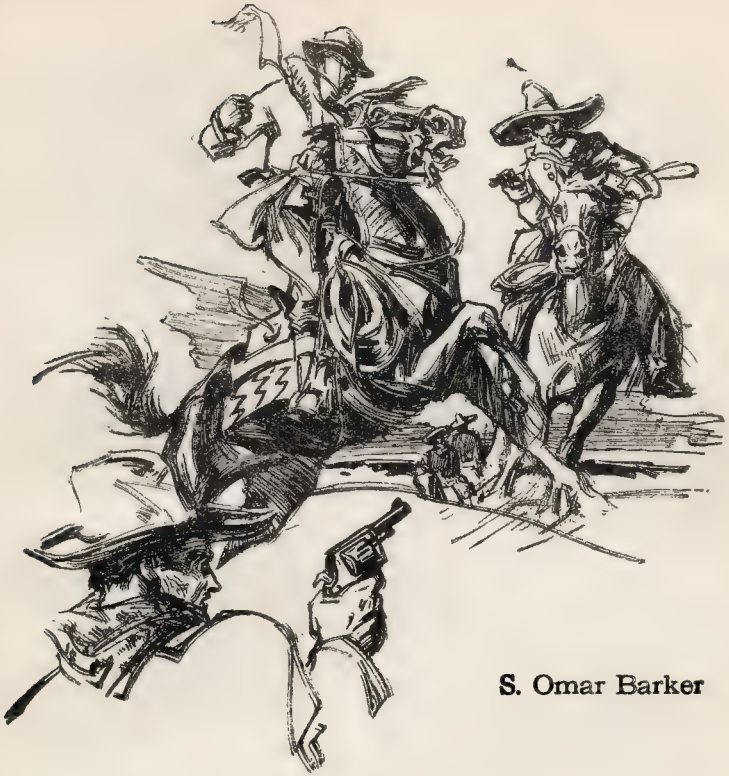
"Beer!" cried an old gray-headed sailor. "Falmouth beer, boys!" Weak, eager laughter rose from man to man.

"All the way from them Chinchas, boys! Here's how, Captain!" cried the old gray-bearded man, lifting his bottle.

"Here's how, sir!" they all cried, tipping their bottles high.

The skipper glanced at the old bark's name on a lifebuoy.

"Courage," murmured the skipper. "Courage—and with it, laughter. *That's the Golden Emblem!*"



S. Omar Barker

SUMMER HAND

IT WAS as if the shrouded sky were a giant sifter, gently shaken, salting a vast, burned steak. Siftily the white, grainy snow came sprinkling down upon a blackened earth. "Drifter" McLarden ducked the broad brim of his Carlsbad *sombrero* against the slight slant of it as he rode. He could hear the small, hard pellets of "hominy snow" pelt upon it, bounce away. Here now was winter, he reflected, holding its inaugural dance on his hat; and here now was barren range where a week ago had stood a brown nap of frost-seasoned grass, ripe and ready for winter grazing. And the bunch grass—charred little hummocks now, graying slowly with lodging snow.

Yonder was a little cove the grass-fire scythe had missed, and in it a few dozen of the Old Man's summer-fattened cows grazing lazily or bedded down at ease, belching fat cuds from well filled paunches, chewing in calm cow-contentment, bovinely unaware of any startling menace in the snow-sifty air. They were not hungry—yet. The cattle could not know that such little coves on Old Man

Pryor's ranch were now but scattered spots on a wide, black wasteland.

Drifter McLarden knew it—surmised it, at least, from what he saw as he loped ranchward from the beef delivery he had made at the stockyards. He knew it would be a tough winter ahead. Short feed, extra riding, bucking blizzardy snowdrifts to scatter scanty hay; cold feet and freezing hands as you nursed "hospital stock" into the sheds and corrals; the dirty work of skinning, for Old Man Pryor always saved the dollar or two to be got from a die-up hide.

All this McLarden knew—and he didn't give a damn. In a week he would be far from here, southward. He was a "summer hand." Always, when the frost got sharp, McLarden headed south. That was understood when Old Man Pryor hired him. That was why they called him "Drifter."

Las Cruces was no tropical paradise—but it was a southward town, mild enough, wild enough, and not too far from El Paso on the Border. You didn't have to hole up for the winter there. Balmy, it was. There would be cards for the Drifter's deft fingers, and a boarding house, with woman-folks' cooking; girls, maybe. Let the card tables contribute their unfailing bit to the stake of his summer wages, and McLarden would winter well and cozily.

Only damn fools stayed north here where you watered your horse each morning through broken ice. And now with the Old Man's range grass-burned to starvation to start with—well, Drifter McLarden grinned at the pelting snow pellets:

"So long, winter! Tomorrow I'm headin' south!"

AS SOON as he saw the jughead sorrel at the hitching post McLarden scented trouble. Old Man "Frenchy" Doucette owned the next ranch east across Elbow Creek, a bigger spread, even, than the Pryor layout. Plenty cattle, plenty grass, plenty in the bank, like as not. Plenty patches on old Frenchy's overalls, too, and plenty ratty the horseflesh that they straddled.

Drifter McLarden, like the rest of Ed Pryor's riders, shared their boss's contempt for the Doucette horseflesh, the Doucette outfit and all the greasy-sack qualities therein implied. But Old Man Pryor himself went further. He hated Frenchy Doucette like a tall, proud wolfhound hates the mange. He chose not to forget the days when Doucette's had been a slipshod sheep ranch.

"Ol' Ed an' Ol' Frenchy," Tugwire Harrison often put it, leaning heavily upon his hard-earned reputation for wit, wisdom and long distance accuracy with tobacco juice, "jest two ol' tomcats spittin' at each other acrost Elbow Crick—Frenchy skeered to come acrost an' Ol' Man Ed glad of it!"

But today, through this thickening spit of snow, Frenchy Doucette had come across.

"Trouble," t h o u g h t McLarden. Quickly he dismounted and went inside. He passed without knocking into the living room whence came the sound of Old Man Pryor's razor-edged voice.

"You're mighty kind, Doucette," Pryor was saying, but his voice would have tested high in the acidity of sarcasm. "Mighty kind. But—"

"Wait minoot!" Frenchy Doucette's voice squeaked rustily. "Friends we are not, Meestaire Pryore, but neighbors, yes! That's what I tell to myself all night after I see thees fire: 'what matter to you, Francois Doucette, that it is not friendship between you? What matter that he have so very steef the neck, thees Meestaire Pryore? Here is weenter an' he have no grass! But Doucette, you have very much grass, very damn good! An' he is your neighbor, Francois Doucette! *Voilá!*' " He spread his gnarled hands. "I am here, *vous voyez,* to make the offer."

Old Man Pryor looked briefly at McLarden as he came in. Amusement

twitched faintly at the young cowboy's lips. The look of stiff, steely cold politeness vanished suddenly from old Pryor's eyes. Swift color reddened the brown of his lean, leathery face as temper slipped its leash. He stood up, a ramrod up his spine. His doubled fist struck the desk beside him with angry warlike drumming.

"Neighbors, eh?" he stormed. "And you want to rent me grass? Hear me, Doucette—I'll pasture my stock in hell before I'll buy a blade from the man who burnt me out! Now get out!"

It was characteristic of Frenchy Doucette that he habitually calmed in the face of another's anger. He rose and put on his battered old flop hat. He stepped toward the door, stopped, faced around.

"*Bien!*" he said, almost a whisper between thin white lips. "I go! But as concerns thees fire, Meestaire Pryore—you lie!"

Ed Pryor stared incredulously at the seedy looking man standing stooped but uncringing before him. The cold steel blueness came back to his eyes. His long hand reached into a drawer of the desk, brought out a .45 from whose barrel all the blue was leather-worn. Calmly he dropped it into the open holster at his thigh. He brought his hands together in front, like a parson.

"Doucette," he said, "go for your gun!"

Frenchy shrugged, grimaced. His right hand pushed back the too-long flap of his faded blue jumper. Like all of Francois Doucette's movements, the motion was quick, nervous. Smooth as the flap of a hawkwing Ed Pryor's right hand swung down, backward; and swifter yet, forward again and up, the worn gun butt firm in the grip of his palm.

But a swifter hand than his clamped like a claw upon his wrist. Its nails bit deep, as the mate to that hand wrenched the .45 free from his fingers. There was a crash and clatter of broken glass as the heavy sixgun hurtled through the window into the snow-sifty air and fell thumpily to the frozen ground. Drifter McLarden stood calmly between the two men, his back to old Frenchy.

"You better set down, Ed," he advised gently. "You're kinder wrought up, I reckon, not to see that he didn't have no gun."

He jerked his chin toward the door:

"You better button up, Frenchy," he snapped sharply. "You'll be facin' the storm, goin' home. *Vamos!*"

"*Bien,*" shrugged old Doucette, and went out. Surprisingly, Ed Pryor sat down.

Drifter McLarden leaned against a table, slowly making a smoke. He fished papers from inside his jacket.

"We loaded Wednesday mornin', Ed," he reported, as if nothing had happened. "Two cars. All in good shape. Frank's ridin' with 'em like you said. Here—" he handed out the papers—"is the ladings."

Old Man Pryor took them in silence. One fist drummed the desk-top in slow, hard thumps. Veins corded his forehead. When he spoke his voice was flat and harsh.

"You were figgering to pull out tomorrow, McLarden?"

"Why yes," the cowboy smiled a little. "I reckon you know how my stick points south ever' year come snow-time, Ed. My regular time is out tomorrow, but if this—this here grass burnin' gives you some extra work, I reckon I could stretch a point an' stay on a few days more—a week maybe, if—"

"Week hell!" Old Man Pryor pounded the desk. "Tomorrow be damned, McLarden! You're leaving tonight! An' damn you for a meddlesome hellion! Don't you let me see hide nor hair of you back here in the spring, neither! You're fired—now—this minute! Get out!"

Pryor stood again, now, threat of imminent violence in his pose. Drifter McLarden's wide, easy mouth no longer smiled, but his voice still came evenly, almost casually, past the cigarette that hung from a lip corner.

"Better take a dally on yourself, Ed," he commented quietly. "You're li'ble to bust a hame-string."

Quite soberly he picked up his damp-brimmed hat and went out. He could hear the Old Man stomping up and down inside the house behind him.

He unsaddled and went on down to the bunkhouse through the thickening snow. Except for the gawky frame of Tugwire Harrison sprawled on a rawhide rocker by the stove, whittling, the cozy shack was empty. A couple of hands was all Old Man Pryor usually kept on during the winter with the stock all under fence on the main home ranch. The rest had gone in with the shipping drive.

"Hi-yah, Drifter," the whittler greeted him. "Take off yer hat an' rest yer ears. No sunny southland fer your lazy carkiss this winter, eh?"

"No? Who says so?"

"Ain't told you yet, eh? Why, the Old Man, sonny, sez to me this mornin,' he sez: 'Tugwire, I'm goin' to need an extry hand or two with gizzard an' guts to he'p us through *this* winter. I'm aimin' to ask ol' Drifter to stay—if he will.' 'Why 'course he will, Ed,' I sez. 'You know ol' Drifter', I sez. 'He likes his winter vacations but he ain't the kind to lope off an' leave his ol' boss in a boghole.' 'Nossir,' I sez, 'ol' Drifter—' "

"Old Drifter," put in the other shortly, "is headin' south, as usual, tomorrow morning. An' what do you say to that?"

For answer the elderly Tugwire Harrison spat eloquently into the sandbox beside the stove.

McLarden went up to supper along with Tugwire as if nothing were amiss. Old Man Pryor was a childless widower. He kept a Mexican cook and ate with his cowhands. Tugwire Harrison batted his little badgerish eyes at the strained silence of the other two men all through the meal.

He surmised, reckoned and calkilated at length about the origin of that grass fire. Some town feller out deer huntin', if y'asked him, like as not, keerless with his smokin', knotheads that they was, these town fellers. Too damn bad it hadn't burnt off ol' Frenchy, across the Crick, instid. Might of ketched fire to some of them woolly cayuses ol' Frenchy made out to use for hosses, if it had.

Tugwire chuckled and whacked his thighs at the highly imaginative vision of them ratty, bush-tailed ponies of ol' Doucette's quitin' the kentry in a blaze of burnin' hoss-hair.

McLarden kept a discreet silence.

After the meal Pryor handed him an envelope with some bills in it, final settlement for his summer's work.

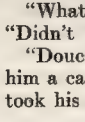
"Count it," said the older man.

"What for?" McLarden grinned and shoved the bills in his pocket. "See you at breakfast, Ed."

The old man scowled, started to say something, changed his mind about it and went out.

"What ails him?" snorted Tugwire. "Didn't hardly eat no supper, an'—"

"Doucette," said McLarden, "paid him a call this evenin'. Maybe it kinder took his appetite."



AN HOUR after first dawn-light, Drifter McLarden was riding southward, leading a packhorse bearing his hot-roll and war-bag. The snow had stopped. The wind came now, sharp and cold, out of the northeast. The earth lay under a grainy, six inch blanket, wind-rippled on top and drifted here and there, dead white under a clear but dingy sky. Off eastward the still invisible sun reddened dully the great black bank of cloud that sulked along the horizon. Last night's skiff of snow had been but a sample. Sure enough weather was making yonder in the northeast.

McLarden angled his face away from the sharp cross-bite of the wind. His left foot, on the windward side, he stomped a little in the stirrup to warm the toes. He had never owned a pair of

overshoes. And why should he? Today he would noon in a sheltered cove well down below the wintry rim of these high mesas. Tomorrow he would be in the Valley, following the Rio down and down, ever southward until no longer would the fangs of the norther snap at his heels.

Maybe the next day he would begin to see blackbirds again. It was a pleasant, warmish sound they made, blackbirds. Kinder made him think of the soft voices of the two pretty *coyotas,* the half-French, half-Mexican girls who waited table at Mom Dawson's boarding house in Cruces.

He worked the chill-stiffened fingers in his buckskin gloves. They were slender fingers. It seemed to him that already they riffled the cards in the pleasant warmth of Monte Smithwick's snug saloon.

Unconsciously McLarden added a little pressure to the spurs. Southward!

At the south Sacaton gate he had to crowd his horse through a jam of cattle, storm drifted, lodged there in the corner against stout fencing. They were not poor cattle, these fifty-odd head, but they were bawling already from empty stomachs. Their trampling had pounded the snow from a wide circle north of the fence. The revealed ground was sooty black, grassless. McLarden was too much cowboy not to notice how sunken their flanks were—already. It doesn't take long for even a fat cow to starve, on nothing.

McLarden shoved through to the gate and got down to open it. His chilled fingers fumbled the lever stick, clumsily, loosened the catch loop, started to swing the gate open. But instead he jerked it shut again, fastened it.

"Hell!" he grunted, and tied his packhorse to the fence. "I can spare an hour, I reckon."

He stepped up to the saddle.

"Hee-yi-ee! Hoop-yoo! Move out!"

The cattle had no mind to go in the face of the sharpening wind, lanced as it was with whirls of picked-up snow. It took McLarden a good two hours of steady, monotonous shoving to work them back north to a rough, rock-rimmed cove where he had noticed, in passing, bunch grass sticking up a foot above the snow—an acre or so the fire had missed. And then it was of little use.

Another bunch of cattle—maybe a hundred head—were already in the cove. They had its scattered bunch grass clumps about cleaned up.

McLarden felt the chill of cooling sweat go over his body. He growled out a few choice phrases of profanity.

"Hee-yi—ee! Hoop-yoo! Move out!"

Angrily he spurred his horse into the treachery of snow-masked rocks to head this bunch off eastward. There ought to be a couple more such rock-rimmed coves a mile or two *para allà* that the fire had probably missed. McLarden's horse caught a shod hoof in a jam of jagged edged rocks. The spurs were prodding him. He went down on the other knee, yanked himself free and went on. But now he limped a little and blood trickled down his leg to blotch red on the whiteness.

Snow started to whip down again now, out of the northeast. It was all McLarden could do to keep the uneasy cattle angling across the edgy slant of it.

By the time he reached the Rock Rim Coves his horse was limping badly. His own toes were tingling with cold. The storm came slicing down like a cold steel knife. Of the four coves he counted on, only one had escaped the fire, and out of it came a drift of cattle. No grass left.

Yonder, two hundred yards away, ran the zigzag of Elbow Creek. Cutting its curves so that the Creek was first on one side and then the other, stretched a stiff line of sturdy, six-wire fence, unneighborly but efficient barrier between the Pryor and Doucette ranges. McLarden circled the cattle and rode to a

knoll just short of the Creek.

Even through the slanting snow he could see that the flats beyond were not dead white as they were here. They were spotted thick with brownish blobs of bunch-grass. In places even the gramma showed up through the snow. McLarden knew these flats; part of old Doucette's "reserve," which, thanks to good seasons, he had not grazed at all for two or three years.

Often enough McLarden had joined the Pryor cowboys in contemptuous comment on a cattleman so cautious that he would waste good grazing like that, year after year, saving it against a day of need that like as not would never come.

It took some time to get a span of that sturdy fence down, without tools, flattened so that cattle would cross it. By the time he had it ready there was not a cow in sight. McLarden overtook them, drifting in straggling strings before the storm, half a mile back southwestward.

"Hee-yi—ee! Hoop—ee-yah!"

Savagely he slashed the doubled rope end across the snouts of the leaders, fighting them back. Sullenly, snail-like, they turned. In a scattering *motte* of charred scrub juniper he left them. On the way back to his pack-horse at the Sacaton gate he walked and rode by turns. His bay was limping badly now. The walking warmed his feet, but he hated it, none the less. The well-booted feet of horseback men grow tender after years of little walking.

McLarden reckoned it well past noon when he reached his pack-horse, standing tail to the wind, shivering.

"Tough, ain't it, Bugsy?"

The horse nickered anxiously.

McLarden found a lone juniper beside some boulders that offered a little shelter from the steady drive of wind and snow. There he dumped his pack. He shifted the saddle to Bugsy, rigging a bedroll blanket on the sweaty bay, poured him a scanty feed of oats and left him staked there to the juniper.

He had to use the spurs freely to force Bugsby back northeastward again in the face of the storm. But Drifter McLarden was stubborn. Headin' southward, yeah—but he aimed to see them hungry cows on grass first. Old Doucette had grass to rent, didn't he? Well, then, damn him, now he had it rented, even if he didn't know it. Damn little hungry cattle knew or cared about grass-rent terms or neighborly enmity. What they wanted was grass. Let the Old Man and Frenchy Doucette come to terms as they might see fit, later.

The seventy-odd head of Pryor cattle taking hungrily to Frenchy Doucette's old grass didn't pause to thank the tired, rawfaced, sweat-chilled cowboy who paused to roll a smoke as the last straggler came out east of Elbow Creek. McLarden's chilled fingers shook, spilling half of the tobacco. But his face wore a grim, cold-stiffened smile as he turned back again across the down fence. He put the spurs to Bugsy. The thickening grayness told him that night was not far off.

Two hundred yards away he reined up suddenly, listening. Down the wind came shouting, the whooping of men trying to drive cattle. His ears caught its Spanish flavor. Frenchy Doucette's cowboys were always Mexicans, and probably because they worked for less, he kept a full crew on, even through the winter.

Wearily Drifter McLarden reined Bugsy around. A rough, rebellious trot was the best he could get out of the horse against that slanting whip of storm.

The five shouting, cursing *vaqueros* were not making much headway prying those cattle loose from old Frenchy's grass. They had perhaps a dozen already choused back across the Creek.

McLarden was in the midst of them before they saw him in the growing dusk.

"*Oigan, compadres!*" the cowboy

called out in drawling Spanish. "What you think you're doing here?"

As if at a signal the five left off chousing cattle and circled him, waving their free hands excitedly.

Threateningly, they wanted to know who the hell turned these Pryor cattle onto their boss's grass.

"I did," said Drifter McLarden. "And what about it?"

He saw that they were all tricked out in their "go-yonder" clothes. Heading back to the ranch from a *fiesta* session at their *placita*, evidently, they had just happened upon these cattle. Probably they were still a little drunk.

"You, eh? By God, *hombre*—" began the chunky one, called Paco Sisneros.

"Wup, here!" McLarden's voice cut in sharply. "Hold it!"

The cowboy's gun stood out in his hand. The right hand of Paco Sisneros stopped dead half an inch from the butt of his Colt. McLarden backed his horse swiftly out of the circle of them so that he might have his back to none.

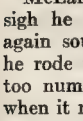
"Listen here! I got no quarrel with you boys. You better leave this business up to your boss. He's goin' to rent this grass to Pryor, you *sabe?*"

"I theenk you lie," said one called Toribio, sneeringly. "Maybe you come weeth us an' talk to the boss you'self, eh?"

"Damn me, I will!" growled McLarden. "But you boys git on home now, an' let these cattle be. You hear me?"

They looked at his gun and heard him.

McLarden watched them go. With a sigh he holstered his gun and turned again southwestward. He wondered as he rode if his finger had actually been too numb to pull the trigger if and when it might have needed to.



DRIFTER McLARDEN had planned to spend this night in the snug comfort of a Mexican adobe village well down toward the Valley. He spent it, instead, in the lee of tarp and boulder, without sleep, nursing green juniper branches into smoky fire lest the snow-laden zero wind chill through to his bones. The cold biscuits and meat he had brought for yesterday's nooning served him now for supper and breakfast as well.

At dawn the sky was clear again, aching blue with the cold. He saddled Bugsy, packed the lame bay. They traveled slowly, plodding a full two feet of snow, again northeastward. Five or six miles it would be to Frenchy Doucette's ranch house.

The sun rose dazzling bright, but with little warmth. These uplands lay glittering in the white grasp of implacable cold. He crossed Elbow Creek, where yesterday he had driven the cattle, on solid ice. The cattle were still there, scattered about, backs humped and icicled with the snow their body warmth had melted. But their flanks were rounded, now, from well-filled paunches, and even yet some bunch grass tops showed up through the snow. On such a range they could always make out to eat. As quick as he could see old Frenchy and make some deal with him, the rest of Pryor's herds could be shoved across here too, and fare as well.

He saw Frenchy sooner than he expected. Half a mile from Elbow Creek he met him, with four of his *vaqueros*, coming to shove the Pryor cattle from his range.

McLarden wasted no words: on what terms would Doucette rent winter range for Ed Pryor's cattle?

"So the calf comes to the milk after all, eh?" said Frenchy Doucette. "Day before yesterday I have range to rent to my neighbor. He gives me slap in the face. Only for you, he have killed me. Now, if I have all the grass in hell, the cattle of Ed Pryor—let 'em starve!"

"*Vamos, hombres!*" shouted Paco Sisneros. "We go to drive them out!"

With a swift movement McLarden squared his horse crosswise in front of them. Reckless of the odds, his grim

smile met them steadily above the cocked .45 in his hand.

"Wait a minute, Doucette," he said. "Let's be reasonable about this."

"*Mátalo!* Kill heem!" shouted the man called Toribio.

McLarden saw five swift *vaquero* hands reach for their guns. The cornered coyote may slash down the first dog to leap at him, but a pack of five or six will get him in the end. Well, if it had to be so, so be it. But it might yet be bluff. If not, Paco would be the first dog down. He saw Doucette's frost-rimmed whiskers quivering, his small eyes bugging out. There was a gun at his thigh today, but his hand had not moved toward it.

Paco Sisneros brandished his gun in the air, and came charging toward him. Still McLarden waited. He had no desire to kill if he could help it. Then suddenly he realized he had waited too long. It was another of the *vaqueros*, Toribio, who was ready to shoot.

McLarden changed his aim. His finger tightened on the trigger.

Suddenly, like the rush of a tiger, the horse of Frenchy Doucette leaped forward. His rump struck Bugsy's shoulder, as Frenchy swung him around to collide shoulder against shoulder with the mount of Paco Sisneros.

Two shots roared out, almost at once. McLarden knew his own had missed. And as for Toribio's—the head of Frenchy Doucette's horse had come into line between McLarden and the *vaquero's* gun at the exact instant of firing. The horse went down like an axed steer. Even as he fell, Frenchy Doucette slipped from the saddle and stood, gun in hand, spitting out curses in mixed Spanish, French and English.

But his humped little back was turned to Drifter McLarden, his face and gun snout to Paco and the other *vaqueros*.

"No! *Bon dieu*, no, Paco!" he rasped. "Stop eet! *No tiren más, cochons!*"

Whatever Ed Pryor, his cowboys and the world in general might think of Frenchy Doucette, his own men obeyed him now as they would have obeyed the warning rattle of a diamond-back. As one man they holstered their guns in the face of his. A little shamed, now, McLarden followed suit.

"Meestaire McLardaine," said the little old man gravely, "I do not forget that two days ago you save me the life when I have no gun. *Alors*, is eet that the Old Man Pryore send you here, now, to put his cows on my grass?"

"No," McLarden spoke frankly. "I don't give a damn whose they are, Frenchy, hungry cows have got to eat. That's why I'm here—why them cattle is on your grass—and why they're goin' to stay there! You said yourself you had the grass to spare."

Frenchy Doucette shrugged.

"The cattle of Ed Pryore," he said, "to hell weeth them! But you—your nose is blue weeth the cold—at my house the coffee pot is always hot. *Bien*, you come weeth me!"

It seemed to McLarden that he could not remember when he had last tasted hot coffee. But he shook his head.

Neverthless, when Frenchy finally ordered his men to let the cattle alone for today, McLarden went with them. Guest or prisoner? He did not know. They rode in silence, Doucette and one of his men mounted double. Another brought the old man's saddle. The *vaqueros* eyed McLarden sullenly.

With the first cup of hot, steaming coffee warming his "innards" Drifter McLarden realized that now he had tied his own hands. When a man saved your life and you accepted his hospitality thus, you couldn't turn right around and fight him. To hell with hungry cattle! His trail lay southward.

"Thees beeg grass fire," Frenchy was saying, "because eet was trouble between us one long damn time ago about the sheep that I had when I come first to thees place, my neighbor and me are not friends. He hate me. Maybe I hate heem, too. So he theenk I make thees

fire, in order that I can sell heem the grass, or maybe buy heem the cattle cheap. But it ees not true!"

The little man's earnestness was comical, but it was convincing, too.

"I reckon ol' Ed knows it ain't," McLarden said. "He was mad, Frenchy."

"Mad! All the time he ees mad, that one! But I don't like that he say thees thing of me! Now *I* am mad, too, myself! But I am not hard in the heart. *Mira,* Meestaire McLardaine, you go tell the Ol' Man Pryore thees: if he come here to me and say: 'Doucette, it is a lie that I speak when I accuse you thees fire.' Then, by gar, the grass I have to spare, I will not sell heem it! No, by the saints, but for the cows I have pity. To them I will *geeve* the grass, McLardaine, what they need! But first he must come, thees *orgulloso,* to admeet he lie! I lend you a fresh horse. You go, McLardaine, now!"

"Hell," said the cowboy, "if that's the way the land lays, I might as well head south again. I'm wastin' my time!"

NEVERTHELESS, mounted on one of Doucette's ratty ponies, McLarden went. He swung southward to cross Elbow Creek where he had let the fence down. He did not know that he was followed.

As he came in sight of the Bunch Grass Flats, he reined up suddenly. Three riders were jamming the cattle back across the Creek westward.

McLarden rammed in the spurs and came on as fast as the pony could wallow and lunge through the snow.

Two of the three riders turned when they saw him. They reined up, waiting, hands on their guns.

Tugwire Harrison, muffled up to the gills, took the hand from his gun and let his tobacco-juicy jaw sag in surprise. Old Man Ed Pryor stiffened in the saddle. His face was drawn and blue with the cold. His gaze moved over the ratty Doucette pony, then to the face of its rider.

"Well, McLarden," he said, "ridin' with the scrubs, eh? This your work?" He waved his hand toward the cattle recrossing the down fence.

The blood rushed angrily to McLarden's face. He had meant to meet the Old Man diplomatically, but now—

"You're damn right it is!" he said. "You damned old fool, you want your cows to starve?"

"I'll git feed for 'em," said Ed Pryor.

"Where?"

The word seemed to strike the Old Man square in the face, like a well driven fist. McLarden could see that it staggered him. Whatever front he might put up, the Old Man must know, as well as he, that there was no range to be had; and as for hay and cake—Ed Pryor could never finance enough of that to feed straight through a long, hard winter. The cattle were hungry already, this first storm.

"Where?"

For once Old Man Pryor's eyes failed to hold their own. They wavered, looked away, squinting in the glare.

"In hell!" he said, and whirled his horse around. He seemed unaware that McLarden was riding up beside him.

"Ed," said McLarden, "old Frenchy sends you word that—"

"To hell with him!"

A big steer, knowing now where grass was and reluctant to leave it, cut back from the others and came charging back across the ice of Elbow Creek. The Old Man spurred savagely out to head him. On the quick icy turn the steer got past him. As he swerved to follow, Drifter McLarden suddenly blocked his path.

"Hold on a minute, Ed," he said quietly. "I want to talk to you."

For once Old Man Pryor "held on." Drifter McLarden's gun was in his hand and there was a queer, hard look in his eyes. Pryor stared at him unbelievingly, but he stopped, just the same.

"Ed," McLarden said with sharp

soberness, "I'm done with monkey-business. Ol' Frenchy's actin' white about this. He paid you a call the other day. You're comin' with me now —to return it!"

A queer gleam, almost of amusement yet with something of approval in it, too, came into the old cowman's eyes.

"I ain't never budged under gun-threat yet, Drifter," he said. "An' I'm too old to start it now. You can put it up—or shoot, as you like!"

But his own hand made no move toward the six-gun at his thigh. For a full minute they sat thus, deadlocked.

The tautness of McLarden's anger sagged. He was remembering the four summers he had ridden for this salty old rannyhan before him—four good seasons of loyalty between them. He knew the Old Man's stubborn temper, but he had known still more of his kindness, his frank, fair-dealing with his hands. Off yonder he could hear cattle—the Old Man's cattle—bawling as Tugwire and the other cowboy drove them—where? To starvation? Yet how many starving cows would it take to be worth this stubborn old man's blood?

Drifter McLarden holstered his gun.

"To hell with it!" he said.

He whirled his horse around. But not the way he had come. Cattle, Doucette, old Ed, his pack, his horse—let them all be damned! Drifter McLarden, once again, was heading south.

He was suddenly aware of Old Man Pryor's horse along side of him.

Ed Pryor's voice was gruff as he reached out his hand.

"I reckon you meant right, Drifter. No hard feelin's?"

"None," said the cowboy shortly. But he ignored the hand.

HE tried to shut out the occasional doleful music of the bawling of hungry, wandering cattle by thinking how the fluting of blackbirds would sound in just a few days now, down in the Valley. He wondered how it would seem to have warm feet again.

It was a thuddy rattle of shots, dulled by the earth's great muffler of snow that jarred him suddenly back to the reality of this cold-bitten range. They came from somewhere back on Elbow Creek. McLarden whirled the ratty Doucette pony around. Ratty or not, he was a tough piece of horseflesh. On the back-track he traveled. The sound of occasional bursts of shooting kept McLarden's spurs to the pony's ribs.

When he had left Doucette's that morning, McLarden did not know that he had been followed, at a safe distance, by five of Doucette's Mexicans, smarting at the recollection of yesterday's run-in with this *gringo* whom their boss's intervention had saved.

McLarden had ridden faster than they thought. They came to the bunchgrass flats after he had gone. But they were out for trouble. They had spied Old Man Pryor and Tugwire Harrison after the steer that had broken back to the Doucette range, and opened fire upon them.

Drifter McLarden crossed Elbow Creek cautiously, paused, listened. The whitened flats, nobbed here and yonder with rocky upthrusts, lay silent. Nor, from the depression of the creek, could he see the lone rider coming at a straining lope from the north.

McLarden rode out into the open.

From behind one of the rocky upthrusts five hundred yards away burst a clatter of rifle-fire. Bullets sputted the snow a few rods before him. From behind another hump farther out beyond sounded the *pow-pow* of six-guns, and a shout of warning in the shrill voice of old Tugwire Harrison.

Swerving away from the rifle fire a little, McLarden put the pony to a lope. So it had come, now, to bullets!

Suddenly, from the first rocky-point "fort" burst forth two horsemen, quartering to head him off. McLarden saw rifles gleam in their hands. He

carried none himself, only the .45. He swerved off a little more, but he did not turn back. One of the *vaqueros* stopped, swung down, fired from on foot. The bullets struck closer, yet still fell short. Old style, lead slug .44's, their range was not long.

Then all at once McLarden ceased to swerve away. From behind the other rocky point appeared a man on foot, a tall man, lunging toward the two *vaqueros* through the snow, his six-gun roaring as he came. It took no second look to see who it was: Old Man Pryor, rushing out to draw their fire away from him.

Grimly McLarden put the spurs to his pony, heading him straight toward the two *vaqueros* with rifles. He knew the range was too great, but now he fired once—twice, anyway.

He felt his pony lunge suddenly and drop struggling into the snow. He freed his feet from the stirrups and plunged ahead. The rifles cracked again. He saw the Old Man lunge head first into the snow. Snow spurted up around where he had fallen. Old Tugwire and Mayfield were rushing out now, too. McLarden yelled to them to keep back. Rifles against six-guns—it could be no use. A bullet whapped through the wing of his chaps. Another—his right leg felt queer and numb. But he could still plow ahead.

Out yonder in the snow the Old Man showed again, coming to his feet.

"Down!" McLarden yelled. "Damn it, Ed, keep down!"

One of the *vaqueros* was taking deliberate aim now, at McLarden. The cowboy turned, dived suddenly as far as he could sidewise into the snow. The shot missed but the *vaquero* was ready as McLarden came up again.

Suddenly, somewhere to the left, northward, there rose a shout.

"Stop eet! *Non! Non!* Stop eet!"

It was not the shout, however, nor the booming *pow* of old Ed Pryor's six-gun that spoiled Toribio's next deliberately aimed shot. It was a bullet from the old .44 carbine of old Frenchy Doucette. Toribio's rifle leaped skyward. He spun around and sank into the snow. Juan swung to his horse again, and used the spurs. Toribio got up, tried to run—and fell.

Suddenly, in spite of himself, Drifter McLarden was down in the snow and could not get up.

Old Frenchy Doucette got to him first, but Old Man Pryor was not far behind. His face showed haggard, more with anxiety than pain.

"Drifter!" he croaked. "They—they git you, son?"

"Jest whacked my leg a little I reckon. I heard the shootin' an' come on back. I didn't want you an' Frenchy—"

"*Bon dieu!*" cried Frenchy Doucette through a shaky beard. "I swear I'm told them *not* to make shooting of thees! I'm told them *not* to kill thees man, who—"

"Well, damn it, you *stopped* 'em didn't you? What you howlin' about?"

Old Man Ed Pryor's voice was gruff, but he was holding out his hand to Frenchy Doucette.

"McLarden's one of mine, Frenchy," he said simply. "I seen you down one of your own men to save him."

Drifter McLarden was not too bad hurt to perceive that old Ed's hand did not go ungripped. And back of that sudden handshake he thought he could see hungry cattle and grass: Pryor cattle and Doucette bunch-grass showing up through snow for them to graze.

Well, as soon as this leg got well, he could be heading on southward.

Yeah, he could, but these two ol' tomcats — purring now — somebody would have to keep them so.

Winter riding, northers, snowy range, cold feet—no blackbirds, no coy *coyotas* at a friendly Cruces boarding house, no cards in a snug saloon—

"To hell with it!" grunted the Drifter.

Strangely enough he was referring, now, to the southward trail.

THE SCORPION

Colonel George B. Rodney

(SECOND OF FOUR PARTS)

SYNOPSIS

IT WAS in the Jolly Pilots tavern that Tom Swayne, master mariner, met Ben Ives, bosun on his father's boat. Ives brought tragic news. The *Catherine,* Captain Cyrus Swayne commanding, had been captured by the buccaneer Long-twelve Porton off the Windward Passage, his ship disabled, and he and his crew taken prisoner. Ives had been sent back as hostage, bearing a demand for ransom.

The times were unsettled. Trouble with France had brewed unchecked. Privateers, bearing letters of marque from the French government, had crippled American shipping. Tom resolved not to let his father's ruin go unpunished.

Within a few weeks Tom's brig, the *Iris,* cleared for the Mona Passage, called the Devil's Graveyard because of French depredations. She was small, but Tom had fitted her with a long twenty-four pound gun, rifled and on gimbals, with a range of a mile. He bore American letters of marque and the pick of a fighting crew, eager for a taste of the Spanish Main and booty. To disguise his intent and embroil Porton with the French, Tom renamed his boat the *Scorpion* and masqueraded as the pirate.

They sighted a French brig homeward bound from Jacmel, and Swayne, in the guise of Porton, made her haul down her colors. The booty, six casks of Hai-

tian gold, was welcome, but the information Swayne obtained was even more so. For Mademoiselle Le Gai—one of his prisoners—was a fiancee of the Jacmel official mentioned in Porton's letter as the man to whom his father's ransom must be paid. Swayne decided to slip past the French ships guarding the harbor, release the girl, and endeavor to learn his father's fate.

Jacmel, ravaged by insurrection, was heavily fortified, but under cover of darkness, Swayne landed a boat and restored the girl to her fiancé. The latter, overwhelmed with gratitude, told Tom that Porton's ship lay at anchor to the west of the harbor, and that Porton himself had landed that day to confer with de Berrien, the military governor. Mademoiselle Le Gai, intensely grateful, offered to have Tom conveyed safely to the sea.

"The sea will always wait," Tom said. "Take me by the most secluded path to the governor's house!"

His men, crouching close to the French sentries, with the gallows a certainty if discovered, eyed him aghast, but they followed him down the darkened avenue.

CHAPTER VI

BETWEEN TWO FIRES

"THERE! There, *M'sieur*, is the house of the general."

Etion stopped in the street and pointed through a maze of ceiba and mango trees to a dark mass of a house, in a corner of which a light burned brightly.

Keeping well to the shaded line of the walk, Tom moved up the drive. He halted when his quick ears caught the shuffle of shod feet and the unmistakable clank of a musket. Then a sentry loomed against the light of the hall; he could see his headgear silhouetted against the candles. The room at the corner of the house was brightly lighted and he could see the figure of a man leaning over a desk littered with papers. He turned to Etion.

Take a good look, Etion," he whispered. "Is that the military governor?"

Etion nodded. Tom drew him further back into the shadows and motioned to his men to close up.

"Look here, Etion," he said gruffly, "we're Americans, at war with France. You're a Negro and a servant to a French lady. Where do you stand in this? Are you for us or against us?"

Etion looked at him and his face twisted in a grimace.

"Listen, Cap'n," he said, "I help Etion Le Grand. 'At who I he'p. Long time ago, w'en I was a boy, Americans catch me an' sell me in Charleston to wo'k on rice land. Good man, my master—Colonel Du Barry. 'En war come wid King George an' I go wid colonel. W'en war done colonel, 'e say, 'Etion, I mak' you free'. America no place for free nigger, Cap'n. I come to Haiti. That worse but I get marry here. Den Spanish run away and French come. After 'at Porton come in his yaller ship, fi' year gone. My wife dead. Porton, he take my daughter an' sell her to Spaniards in Havana. I neber see her agin. You ask me w'ere I stan'? Long as you mak' war on Porton, I wid you."

"That settles it," said Tom. His men, who had been listening wide-eyed, closed up a little. "How can we get rid of that sentry?" muttered Tom.

Etion came to life.

"I know dis place," he said. "On'y one soldier here at one time. I tend to soldier. He ees Franch. Frenchman help Porton. All same as Porton. You watch."

He slunk back into the shadows and they waited. A moment later Tom saw a shadow drifting from bush to bush, it merged with the trunk of a great ceiba tree.

The sentry moved along his beat, humming a little song. With Jacmel in French hands and a heavy force of in-

fantry in the redoubts he knew that all was safe. He paced to the end of his beat, turned. While he still hung on his heels, a shadow leaped from the blackness. Tom saw what looked like long tentacles of blackness wrap about the sentry's neck as Etion's skinny arms, as strong as steel, choked the man into unconsciousness. He dropped like a dead man and Etion seemed to swarm all over him. The next minute Black sprang to help him; between them they managed to tie the man with his own gunsling and to gag him with his shirt. They laid him in an inert mass under a bush and came back to Tom.

"Black, you come with me. You others stay here."

WITHIN the house, the man still bent over his papers. As the inner door of the room swung quietly open the man glanced up to see two white men—and a pistol-muzzle not five feet from his face.

General Alphonse de Berrien, Military Governor of Haiti, leaped to his feet with a choking cry that passed into a throaty gurgle as Tom spoke:

"Stand still . . ." His pistol hand spoke a language that needed no translation. With bulging eyes the general rose silently, his eyes fastened on Tom as a bird eyes a snake. Tom motioned to Etion at his heels.

"Ask him if he speaks English," he said.

Etion jabbered excitedly and turned. " 'E say a leetle, suh."

"Tell him I am the captain of the American privateer *Scorpion* and he is my prisoner. Black, tie the man's hands behind him with that curtain cord. Tie him tightly so he can't get loose. If he resists knock him over."

Black snatched a curtain cord from a window and lashed the trembling man's hands behind him; at a nod from Tom he tied a handkerchief about his jaws.

General de Berrien read his fate if he resisted. He knew better than to struggle but his eyes bulged and his breathing was stertorous as Tom hurled him into a chair and turned to Black.

"I'll have a look at his desk. I can't read much French, but I can read it better 'n I can speak it. I can read a ship's manifest, I reckon."

"I kin read French pretty good, sir . . ." Black surrendered his prisoner to Etion and slouched forward, taking the papers. "These here, sir, are French *assignats*. Paper money. It ain't worth a damn. Just promises to pay sometime. These Frogs are long on promises and short on payin' when the time comes. These here—" he shuffled some blank forms—"seem to be blank commissions for letters of marque to be give to ships to turn 'em into privateers. Etion's tryin' to talk to you, sir."

" 'Is man," said Etion in a low voice. "he say 'e ees prisoner of war, suh. He say gib him treatment due his rank. 'E say he ees military governor of Haiti an' you are crazy mans."

Tom grinned. "He's in one hell of a fix for a military governor. So he's the man who can turn a pirate into a privateer, huh? Well, it just happens that he's the man I want. Bring him along, Black; hang on to him no matter what happens. Come on. Let's get back to the boat."

With a pistol muzzle in the small of his back, General de Berrien moved swiftly. The other men joined them at the stair-foot and they crept along the dark street. From time to time the door of a tavern opened and laughter and singing drifted out to them. Once a shot made the party pause; then an outburst of musketry from a distant redoubt crashed like thunder. As they passed an open door their prisoner struggled violently, as though he knew this was his last chance of escape, but Black tripped him and Tom dragged him to his feet.

"Down this street, I think," he said. "The beach can't be far."

All streets led to the beach that was a common street for all Jacmel. There was no permanent guard on that beach, nor any need for one. Soldiers held each end and the escaped slaves had no boats. In any case, a party small enough to land undetected would be too small to cause much damage.

Baker turned into a broad path that led past an inn and was hurrying along the dark road when the unexpected happened. The tavern door flung suddenly open and the streaming lamp-light outlined the Americans and the figure of General de Berrien, his hands tied, being harried along by the raiders. At that moment, the prisoner, who had managed to free his jaws of the gag, raised his voice in a shrill cry.

"A moi!" he shouted. *"A moi, mes soldats!"*

For a brief second silence gripped the crowd inside the tavern. Then two men surged into the street. A sharp oath was followed by a rush of stamping feet and by the ring of steel.

"To the boat, men!" Tom's voice rang out above the noises of the crowd. "Run —and keep the man. Hold him."

They broke into a run. Tom seized the prisoner and hurled him forward. He struggled in vain against Black and Baker as they hustled him to the beach, where the sea-flattened sands gave firm footing. The boat on the shingle showed, a long black blot against the water. A sudden hail came to them as the boat-guard came to life.

"Who in hell is that?" demanded a man. That was Gwynn's reckless shout.

"Shove off into deep water an' stand by."

The bow-man promptly shoved the boat off the beach and the oars thumped in the thole-pins.

"Port-oar give way! There! Way enough! Back-water to starboard! Back her against the swell an' keep her nose to the beach."

A sudden spit of musket-fire tore the night. The pursuers, increased by soldiers from taverns and by the beach patrol returned from its rounds, hurried along the wake of the running Americans. Tom's men had a pistol each. The crowd had muskets and bayonets. One volley would settle the matter. Suddenly a shrill command cut the uproar.

"Fire!" it said. "Fire, you petrified camels. Give fire."

Some one kicked open a lantern, jerked out the candle and set fire to some dried beech-grass that flamed and roared with a fine crackle. Two muskets crashed.

As though those shots were a signal a wild yell broke out in the night and a sudden wave of half-crazy men burst on the startled group. Desperate men, driven half crazy by the memory of their wrongs, drove down upon the startled soldiery. One soldier had a brief view of that wave. He turned to run with a wild yell:

"Les negres," he shouted in shrill-accented terror. The wild Negroes of the hills are on us. Fire, men! Fire!"

There was time for neither words nor explanation. No man needed to be told what had happened. If that crowd of Negroes overcame them every man in that crowd knew what it meant. It meant a death of unbelievable torture.

For a brief second they stood appalled; then some one had sense enough to direct a volley. A score of muskets flashed and roared. In the mêlée Tom and his men turned and hurried for the shoreline and almost hurled their prisoner at the boat.

The incredible had happened. The wild Negroes had done what they had never dared do before; they had raided the French lines.

QUIN, at bow, stood on no ceremony. He reached out with his eight-foot boat-hook, inserted the hook between collar and neck of the breathless pris

oner and pulled. And Alphonse de Berrien came like a netted land-crab, while Tom, with Baker and Black and little Etion, fought and struggled with the spume of the black wave that fought madly to kill any white man. *Les blancs* had no friends in Haiti, any more than they have today.

The wave surged forward with yelps and shouts and Jacmel woke in terror. The loud, shrill rattle of the French drums turned out startled troops; shrill bugles yelped for aid and were answered from the dark jungle by the deep roar and throb of the great Raba voodoo drums from the distant hills, where flares of red fire lit the sky. Too late the French commander of the city guard realized his mistake. Fever, dysentery and debaucheries had loosed bonds of discipline; they could not be tightened suddenly.

Fortunately the wild men had no idea of how general was the terror. They had not planned a real attack. It was just a raid for arms. They were armed with rude pikes made by plantation smiths, with a few stolen pistols and fowling pieces—mostly with cane-knives made in Connecticut and reshaped by savage labor—but those weapons were deadly in the darkness.

The mob filled the *fosse;* they drove back overpowered guards and snatched muskets from their nerveless hands. They turned the captured bayonets on the French and cut down a patrol to the last man, while French drums shrilled and rattled the alarm and the city poured out to their defense.

The attackers knew their limitations. They could not hope to hold or loot the place against organized French soldiery. That might come later. But they had put the fear of God into French hearts that night. A series of shrill yells recalled the wariest and the ends of the half-moon of fighters drew quickly back, seeking the cover of the jungle before the frigates in the harbor could open fire. The line drew swiftly back and the men at the end on the beach were suddenly aware of Tom and his men struggling to get their prisoner into the boat. They knew they must get him off to the schooner before those heavy French frigates could learn of the *Scorpion's* arrival.

All white men were alike to that frenzied crowd. The French Republic that had promised freedom while it kept them in slavery could not be trusted. All white men were foes. There were in that crowd men freshly brought from Africa who held life cheap and well paid for, if in dying they could kill even one of their foes. Here were white men before them.

The pebbled beach supplied them with ammunition. In a second a hundred rocks rattled against the boat and splashed in the water. De Berrien went down a-sprawl; Black fell headlong, stunned by a great rock. Quin jerked both men into the boat and dropped with a scalp-wound from a flung cane-knife. He scrambled to his feet and reached a hand to Tom, who was staggering knee-deep through the water under the impact of a stone that sent him stumbling. Then a light surge of surf drove the boat beachward. In another moment she would beach and be swamped by the crowd of fighting Negroes and every man murdered.

"Americans!" shouted Quin desperately. "We are Americans. I tell you we are not French; we are Americans!"

But he had better have held his breath. A hundred blacks surged across the beach; then a man recognized de Berrien. The sight of him was like the sight of a fox to dogs. Tom staggered to the boat's stem and set his shoulder to it.

"Shove off into deep water," he shouted above the roar of the sea and the crazy yells of the mob. "They'll swamp you. Give a hand here."

The boat gave way slowly and slid

inch by inch across the sand. Then, as Tom set his foot on the sharp edge of coral, a rock as big as an orange struck him full on the back of the head. He plunged forward and fell face-down in the shallow water. His last thrust sent the rocking boat off the beach.

Tom Swayne never knew how long he lay in the water, nor how he ever got out of it. He seemed to have been thrust through with sharp blades; each breath that he drew seemed to pierce him anew. Two men picked him up by both arms and rushed him along the jungle trail behind the mass of the jubilant, retreating Negroes. They had killed a dozen men; they had overcome a strong patrol; they had fired several houses. They had even carried one of the batteries and had spiked its guns with nails brought for that purpose. Behind them the delirious rattle of the infantry drums continued to sound the alarm.

Finally his captors set Tom down. He strove to rise but his feet seemed weighted with lead. Heavy brush scratched his face. He fell like a sack of sand. The next thing he knew a light was shining in his face and Etion was bending over him.

"Cap'n," he whispered. There was no mistaking that slurring speech that Etion had picked up in the distant Carolinas. "Cap'n, is yo' daid?"

"Huh?" Tom struggled to a sitting posture and drew a shuddering breath. Some Negroes had lighted a fire; by its smoky light he saw the motley crew. Almost all were naked to the waist. Some were striped with red and yellow ochre or barred with paint and blood. Some were wounded and the dried blood had caked and dried on their wounds. Most of them were crazy drunk or on the way to become so; some on the rum found in every French canteen but most with success, the headiest wine of all. A black giant in the blue-and-gold coat of a French commissary of customs, waving a naked cane-knife, drove the others aside with frenzied yells. Through the graying dawn that filtered through the jungle Tom's fevered brain heard the drums. Their throbbing beat was like the pulsations of a fevered brain. The black giant snatched Etion aside and shrieked at him; Etion shrinking aside, answered shrilly. Tom heard the words; even his slight knowledge of French told him their meaning.

"No," he said hotly, waving both hands. "No! Not French. American."

Chaos broke out anew and then came coma.

CHAPTER VII

THE TORTURE BOWL

A SINGING insect hum greeted his return to consciousness. His head ached; his mouth was as dry as a lime-kiln; every limb was stiff and sore. Full realization came as Etion bent over him. He sat up and swore:

"Where in hell are we?" he asked.

Etion shook his head and nodded at the door. It was open and Tom could see outside. Then he glanced about and his face changed. The room was about ten feet square and was walled with almost solid masonry. A thatched roof overhead rustled and moved as tiny house-lizards ran to and fro. Through the open plank door he caught occasional glimpses of a sentry, musket on shoulder. The sentry was as black as Erebus and was clad in leather breeches, blood-stained, a dirty shirt and a torn straw hat; his bare feet padded like a monkey's as he walked before the house.

Etion said grimly, "They are my own people, Cap'n. They are slaves 'at ran away from the French."

"Then we have no cause to worry," said Tom. "We're not French."

"All whites are the same to them," said

Etion. "Here they come. We will see what they mean to do with us."

Two men entered the room. Without a word to either prisoner, they took a long table, carried it outside and set it under a giant tree. A crowd of men at once surged up to it and stood waiting.

Tom's eager eyes scanned that crowd. He was more or less accustomed to see slaves in his own land, but these were utterly different from any he had ever seen. Slaves were there who had been scarred by lash and branding irons, half-naked men, wholly desperate by French cruelties. Their faces showed bestial elation at their success. They had decimated a French patrol; they had burned some houses; they had captured a considerable quantity of arms. Most satisfactory of all, they had taken some prisoners on whom they could wreak their hate. Their excited jabber came to Tom on a gale that reeked of sweat and blood and dust.

A giant Negro shouted for silence. His voice sounded like the inarticulate howl of a bayed beast but Tom could distinguish every word.

"Bring the prisoners here."

Tom set his teeth. No white man had a chance with these people. Knowing something of French and Spanish cruelties to slaves, he could not wholly blame these men. But he realized that his own condition was desperate.

Four men armed with short pikes and cane-knives broke into a run. They passed Tom's open door and he wondered vaguely what had happened. Then a muffled shout broke the hush and the men came, urging a white man at the points of their pikes. His hands were lashed behind his back; his blue sailor's jacket was torn from collar to skirt and his face was a mask of half-dried blood. At sight of him Etion snatched at Tom.

"Porton!" he hissed. He shook from head to foot.

"What? You're crazy, Etion." Tom jerked the man to his feet. Porton the pirate—that?

Etion fairly babbled: "Why wouldn't I know 'im? Didn't I tell you how he taken my daughter? No man forgets 'at, Suh. I see him three, two times when I workin' as boy for *ma'amselle*. Ees man Porton come see Monsieur Le Clave too. Look, Cap'n—"

But Tom's eyes were on the man. Could Etion be right? Was this indeed Porton? Long-twelve Porton, for whom ships scoured the seven seas, whose name was known for cruelty from Port o' Spain to Cap Haytien?

Even among big men Porton would have been classed as huge. Men anywhere would have called him handsome but for his cruel mouth and a sinister sort of glare in his blue-gray eyes. Tom eyed him fascinatedly and wondered. How had Porton been taken prisoner by these escaped slaves? Etion's excited jabber sounded loud to him.

"Look, Cap'n," he almost shouted. "See 'at big man? I know 'im too." He pointed to the black leader, who was almost as huge as Porton. "'At man's name Jorveaux. One time he slave to le Compte de Tours. 'E handle small canoes fo' de fishin' for the count. One tim' de Count not like w'at Jorveaux do an' he whip him good wid whip made of thorns an' brand him too. Dem scars on him now, suh. 'N'en one night, w'ile de count away, somebody bu'n de house. De count come back an' find house gone an' his wife killed. Dey say 'at Jorveaux's wo'k. I not sure 'bout 'at, though. Look, suh!"

TOM could not help looking. The sun stood well above the wall of the jungle. The big man, Porton, his hands fast found, was being urged forward at four bloody pike-points, the centre of a surging, shouting mass of half-crazy, bloodthirsty blacks. Tom's tongue licked the sticky line of his dry lips.

Jorveaux's voice boomed out; every word was clearly audible.

"Two months ago your ship beached on the barrier reef off Simone River. The French were after you to hang you and all your men; we helped you. Our men took out your cargo, careened your ship and helped you in every way when you repaired it. Your men lived ashore with us. They eat our food. They drank our rum. They took our women. But because we hated the French even worse than you did we helped you. We reloaded your ship and not even an iron bolt was lost. In return for that you promised to bring us a cargo of arms that we were to buy from you with French gold. We got your water-butts filled and you put to sea. Then . . ."

Jorveaux struggled hard for self-control and a little white foam lay in the corners of his mouth as he worked himself into a fury. His men knew that mood and backed away from him but the four pike-men prodded Porton closer.

"Then our enemies, the French, offered you aid," said Jorveaux. "How do I know? You fool, we have agents in every house where the French have black servants or where French officers take black or brown mistresses. We know all that takes place. If a Frenchman itches we know where. Four days ago your ship dropped anchor in the harbor and you offered to sell to the Frenchman the arms that you promised us."

"Hold on . . ." Porton struggled hard to free his arms but the bejuce vines that bound them held like iron; great sweat drops ran down his face. "The first thing I knew, those two damned frigates were anchored alongside me. Either one could blow me out of the water. Some of my men disclosed the fact that I had arms and powder under hatches. The military governor threatened me if I did not let him have the arms. That's all there was to it, Jorveaux. I tell you I had no choice."

He strained against the bejuce vines; wet by sweat and worn a little by sudden chafing, that vine gave a little. A jerk and his hands were free. With a quick swing he gathered two pike-men into his arms and swept them together till their heads cracked like a land-crab suddenly stepped on. He flung both men aside and snatched at a falling pike.

The crowd sucked suddenly back like poplars in a wind. Instinctive fear of a white man gripped them for a brief moment. In that moment Porton's pike went home in the soft tissues of a man's belly and he fell with a half-moan, half-shriek, as Porton broke for the safety of the jungle.

But the jungle was fifty yards away and the crowd was on his heels like hounds after a fox. A pike, flung straight between his legs, tripped him; he fell heavily and a dozen men hurled themselves on him. They jerked him to his feet, naked to the waist, dragged him back to where Jorveaux stood by the table. He was breathing hard and his eyes were stony.

"*Taladro,*" he said shortly.

A sudden yell went up from the crowd.

THE word meant nothing to Tom, but Etion caught his breath in a sob, as a half-dozen men dragged Porton across the table, spread-eagled him upon it and lashed his hands and feet to the frame. Then they passed other ropes and vines about his body until he was almost swathed in ropes. Tom could see his great hairy chest rising and falling tempestuously as he fought for a full breath. At a word from Jorveaux, two men quickly brought a scoopful of live embers from a fire, while two other men hunted along the edge of the jungle till they found a tree that seemed to suit them. They came back presently with

a calabash that they set on the table by Porton's head.

Lashed fast to the table frame by hands and feet, swathed by ropes and bejuce vines, Porton could barely move. The sun-glare in Tom's eyes blinded him, but he managed to see a man snatch the ragged shirt from Porton's chest. Then another man seized the calabash, turned it upside down and swiftly removed the shell; another man adjusted in its place a little brass bowl, on the upturned bottom of which a man laid a few live embers. Then all stood back to await developments.

The eyes of the now silent crowd centered on the bound Porton. Helpless, he lay motionless, save for the heaving of his chest. Tom turned to Etion.

"What the devil," he asked, "are they waiting for?"

"*Taladro,*" said Etion, shivering.

"You said that before," said Tom. "That doesn't tell me much. What's *taladro* mean?"

"*Taladro,*" said Etion again as though that explained all. "'At man Jorveaux, 'e been onetime slave in Porto Rico, Cap'n. 'E know *taladro.* 'E borer w'at bore in wood. Big beetle, Cap'n. 'E borer." Etion made a twisting, boring motion with his hands that left nothing to the imagination. "Dem men w'at went to tree caught borers. Dey come back an' put *taladros* on 'at man Porton an' cover 'em up wid 'at brass cup. 'N 'en dey put hot fire on bottom of bowl. Borers try to get away from fire. No way can get away, 'ceptin' they eat out through Porton! Him eat quick through live flesh."

"Good God," said Tom and turned sick as a shriek of agony from Porton rang out above the yells. Then another shriek and scream on scream as the *taladro* took hold and tried to escape from his heating prison by gnawing his way through living tissues. The giant frame of the pirate surged and swelled against his bonds but they would not give. Finally, at a signal from Jorveax, a man raised the brass bowl and Jorveax stepped close to his victim.

"If you can not endure one *taladro,* how will you stand five?" he asked. In two hours they can eat through a foot of solid timber. The next will be placed over your heart. It will be a very slow death and not pleasant. If you die by it, it will be your own choice. If you will carry out my orders all may yet be well with you. Will you get for me the arms and the powder?"

Porton struggled for speech but words did not come. He nodded heavily and a flake of heavy spume blew from his mouth. His breath came sobbingly and his chest rose and fell like a broken bellows. Jorveaux eyed him closely.

"Cut him loose," he said. "He will do what I ask. But there is yet payment to be made for the man he killed."

Two men cut Porton loose and Tom saw a long red welt on his chest and twin trickles of blood that ran slowly down his torso.

"Rum," said Jorveaux shortly.

A man held a coconut dipper of rum to Porton's lips. He drank noisily as a horse drinks and dropped back on the table.

"Now about those arms and the powder?" said Jorveaux. "Where are they?"

"On the *Bristol Belle,*" panted Porton. "You know the French gave me letters of marque. That makes me safe in a French port. I came into port with my cargo of arms. I took those arms from a Spanish ship and came into port to get them to you as best I could. Some of my men got drunk and talked too much. They boasted of havin' taken the Spanish ship so the French learned about it. The next thing I knew, two of their damned frigates anchored by me. I can't move without their knowin' it. The French military governor sent for me and told me they would take the arms and powder at their own price. That's all."

"I think we need some *taladros*," said Jorveaux briefly. "You tell me but half the truth. I knew last night that you were to meet the military governor. That was why we raided the French lines. Not to get a few guns but to get . . . You! My friend, you are worth many guns to me. Do we get the arms?"

Porton nodded briefly. "You get 'em if I can make it, but I'm damned if I see how I can get 'em to you."

"Let him get up," said Jorveaux.

PORTON struggled to his feet, a hideous figure. Even in that furnace-like heat he shivered but his odd eyes glared at his captors with the hate and fear of a trapped wolf.

"I will get back at once to my ship," he panted brokenly. "I'll have to figure some way to get the arms to you. I will take my ship out if I have to fight both French frigates."

Jorveaux laughed. "I was field overseer for le Compte de Tours," he said "I learned there to trust no man. You will remain in my hands." He motioned to a man who came forward with a six-foot cross-cut saw that bent in his grip. "I have writing materials here for this very purpose. You will write a letter to your lieutenant; and you will direct him to bring your ship to anchor in Saone Bay."

"The French will never let him leave his anchorage," said Porton desperately.

"That will be unfortunate for you," said Jorveaux grimly. "See—" He pointed to the cross-cut saw. "I give you a week. If at the end of one week your ship is not at anchor in Saone Bay I will saw off one of your feet and send it to the French lines. The week after

that the other foot will go. After that I will send four inches at a time."

"I—I will write the letter," said Porton grimly.

At a nod from Jorveax a man brought paper and ink and some quill pens from a house among the bamboos and laid them before Porton. He seized a pen and drove it squealing across the paper. When it was done Jorveaux took it gingerly and examined it.

"If you lied to me," he said, "you will pay."

"Hold on a minute," said Porton frantically. "If my ship is beached on the reefs I am ruined. She will be lost with all hands. I can't lose my crew. She carries over a hundred men. . . ."

"I promise you your life. But only you," said Jorveaux. And his eyes hardened.

"Here," thought Tom: "I'll see what sort of a man he is. He will never sacrifice his men."

"She will be lost with all hands," said Porton again.

"I will see that she is," said Jorveaux quietly. "You alone are being given a chance to escape. If you had not killed that man, your crew would have been spared, perhaps."

Porton showed his relief. He dared not explain that his great fear had been that some man of that crew might escape. Every man in that crew knew of the hidden loot on El Cubil, though no man knew the soundings of the channel that led to the only anchorage. He had the soundings of the channel that led to the only anchorage. He had too much buried loot on El Cubil to take a chance.

"Send the letter," he said hoarsely.

"Clay," muttered Tom, "an' damned rotten clay too. Sacrifices his whole crew to save his dirty hide."

Jorveaux pouched the letter and turned to his men.

"Guard this man carefully," he said. "Put him in the stone house with the others and place two sentries at the door."

Porton was dragged away by a half dozen men. Tom was still staring out into the blinding sunlight when they bulked in the doorway. At sight of them Etion came to life.

"It ees our turn now, Cap'n," he muttered.

CHAPTER VIII

BLOOD O' THE BUCCANEERS

ONE glance at that group told Tom his danger. The bloodlust was on them and they surged across the clearing, shouting and shrieking. A man brought from the house a bucket of rum. They drank it like water, then surged over to surround Tom and Etion as they were dragged before Jorveaux. Tom called to Etion sharply:

"Tell him that a mistake has been made about us," he said. "Tell him that we are not enemies. We are at war with the French as he is."

But Etion paid no attention to him. His quick eyes had seen a little canvas wallet that had fallen from Porton's shirt when he was stretched on the table; while his eyes focused on Jorveaux, his questing feet slowly worked the wallet aside. It passed unseen simply because the crowd was so interested in the torture of the *taladro* that they had no attention for lesser things.

"Talk to 'im, Cap'n," said Etion. "I mus' get this. It b'long to 'at man Porton."

Tom glanced quickly about him. He had no idea what ferment was at work in Etion's head but he felt sure he must have a reason for what he did. He must distract the attention of that crowd long enough to let Etion get that wallet.

"Listen . . ." He stepped forward, faced Jorveaux with upraised hand. "French guns, you fools!" he shouted. "Listen!" And as though done by his

own hands a sudden long crash sounded through the jungle.

The crash was heaven sent. Every man leaped aside and sprang for cover. Some snatched cane-knives and pikes; a few grabbed muskets; they stood quivering, waiting for orders. Jorveaux realized that they were on edge. Stampede would come next. He seized a pikeman and threw him almost across the clearing.

"Quiet!" he shouted. "Have you never heard a tree split before? It was only a capilan tree. You know how they split."

They looked at each other and drifted back to the table where Etion stood erect. Tom glanced at him, then at the ground at his feet. That moment had been enough. Then Jorveaux turned on him, a black fury.

"You say you are Americans," he roared. "All white men are alike to us this day. White men brought us out of Africa, from Guinea and sold us into slavery. White men . . . ."

"Don't be a fool . . ." Tom flung a yelling pike-man aside and faced Jorveaux. "Every man who is a slave here was a slave in Africa before. You only changed a worse slavery for this. I tell you we are Americans. If you are enemies of the French, so are we. I came here to fight the French. You say you want arms. I'll get them for you. My men are better fighters than yours. They have better arms. Last night with three men I captured the military governor. He is now on my ship off the coast. As we were getting back to my boat your men mistook us for the French and took me and my man prisoners while we were putting de Berrien on board my boat."

Jorveaux wavered. The facts known to him bore out what this white man said but he did not choose to trust any white man. Then Etion spoke. He jabbered excitedly with frenzied gestures and almost foamed at the mouth. Jorveaux asked:

"How does it happen that you, a black man, a *papaloi* of our own people, are with this man?"

"I am free . . ." Etion drew himself up with dignity. "I am as free as Agoue, god of the sea. I serve this white man for two reasons. Listen, Jorveaux, I know all you are and have been. You know who I am and why and how I hate the French. I tell you that other white man, Porton, is a thief and a murderer. He has already killed one of your men."

"He shall pay for that when we have got his powder and arms," snarled Jorveaux. Then he turned to Tom: "If I set you free will you give me de Berrien?"

"What do you want him for?"

"To be sawed into inches," said Jorveaux fiercely. "He had my two sons shot last month as rebels. Will you give him to me?"

"No," said Tom coolly. "The man is my prisoner. I too need arms and powder to fight the French and the French must supply them."

"Then get the arms that Porton has and bring them to me. Do that and I will give you . . ."

"Porton?" asked Tom.

Jorveaux laughed.

"If I free you," he said, "will you make de Berrien free Porton's ship, so that the arms can be landed where I can get them?"

Tom hesitated a moment. His account lay with Porton. Porton had robbed his father on the high seas and had murdered young Sykes. Porton must pay. But if Porton was left in the hands of these savages he would be tortured to death. He had already seen what they would do. No white man could connive at torture, even for a Porton. He meant to settle his account with Porton, but he must do it in his own way.

"I must have time to think it over," he said dully. "Give me time."

Jorveaux stared at him. He could not

understand this delay. He motioned to his men.

"Put these in the old stone house with Porton," he said. He turned to Tom: "You have till morning to decide. If you meet my demands I will free you and help you. If you refuse, you and Porton shall die the same death. You know what that will be."

The men seized both Tom and Etion and hustled them into the little hut; then the heavy plank door slammed shut behind them.

FOR a moment the cool darkness was like a wet bandage to Tom's aching eyes; then things took form in the dusk. A low groan made him glance hastily about him. That was Porton. Iron-nerved though the man was, he had collapsed after his experience. He lay in a huddle in a corner of the room, his arms wide, his face smeared with sweat and blood, his wide eyes staring at Tom and Etion.

"Who the bloody 'ell are you?" he demanded hotly.

"An American," said Tom. "They tell me you're the famous Long-twelve Porton."

"The 'ell they do? Yus. I'm Porton. You 've 'eard o' me, huh? I'm a damned fool. If I wasn't I'd never ha' been took like this. Who're you? One o' that man Jorveaux's spies, maybe?"

"Huh. Damned likely, ain't it? If you want to know, I own the *Iris* schooner . . ." He gave the *Scorpion* her old name. "I've been doin' a bit of tradin' among the islands."

"Aye," Porton grunted scornfully. "I know you damned Yankees. Sneakin' in by day an' out by night with a blue light at your cross-trees and a spring on your cable when you anchor. Runnin' a pike an' carronade account wi' all ships that sail from a Spanish fort. Right now you're after West Injy produce—coffee an' sugar an' indigo—an' gittin' ten prices fer 'em in French and English ports. I know that lay."

"Long-twelve Porton ought to know." Tom could hardly conceal his disgust but he had much to learn from Porton. "Maybe I was lookin' for you, Porton. Don't you need a partner? Two ships can do your work better than one. What you need in your business is a small schooner like mine. If I'd scouted the harbor for you before you entered it, they'd never have got you four between two frigates. Suppose you had a schooner like mine. She could hang on the Spanish flanks and keep tabs on their ships sailin'. They've got silver and gold shipments to be picked up. This war in Europe has sent up all prices too. See? It can be done for a price."

"I see. Pilot fish fer a shark, eh?" said Porton, grinning. "If we was clear o' this hell-hole it might work. Did you hear what they said to me?"

"Yes. And I saw what they did. You are not done with 'em yet. Do you believe for one minute that the French in Jacmel will ever let your ship leave harbor with her holds full of arms and powder that the French want? The French don't care if these Negroes kill you."

"I'm a French privateer," said Porton. "They gave me letters of marque."

"They won't help you because of that," Tom jeered. "And all the world loves a privateer. I'd as soon sail on The Account."

"You git me clear o' this damned place," said Porton, "an' you an' me'll sail on The Account. I got a sort of a partner, name o' Batten. 'Portfire' Batten, they call him. English as I am. Coils all his ropes Bristol fashion and serves lime juice agin scurvy. He's raidin' the Spanish Main right now."

"On letters of marque?"

"Letters of marque hell," said Porton. "That's all my eye Betsey Martin, as th' ol' song says. We use letters o' marque to give us entry to a French

port fer a base of supply. What we do when we 've dropped the land is nobody's business but ourn. Sometimes Batten's a peaceful trader. What one of us learns the other follers up. See? Midnight, deep-sea meetin's, with word o' good pickin's and where it's at. Now not long ago I picked up a Yankee bark carryin' an Englishman an' his daughter as passengers to York. The damned fool of a Yankee had swapped his guns to the French fer coffee. Most of 'em. And the rest was so covered with his cargo that he couldn't fight. He give us one gun and we boarded him."

"Well . . .?" Tom's breath almost

stopped. He knew suddenly that he was hearing the story of the taking of his father's bark, the *Catherine*. "What happened after that?" he asked.

"His crew j'ined me," said Porton casually. "All but one did. There was a damned bull-headed boy, name o' Sykes, who wouldn't jine. He was so damned keerless that he went an' fell overboard. He'd got his feet mixed up with some round shot an' two of 'em stuck to his heels. He never come up. There was a girl, too . . . ."

"What became of her?" Tom fought down a wild desire to choke the life out of Porton and waited.

"I've got the girl safe enough," chuckled Porton with a leer. "An' by God, I'm aimin' to keep her. I'm askin' a ransom in gold and ship's supplies, but when it's paid I wouldn't be surprised if the girl was to git lost an' stay behind with me. Hell man! Anne Bonny an' Mary Read wasn't the only women who ever sailed on The Account. Ruth Derwent 's no better 'n them, I reckon."

THE door crashed open and a man set a small bucket of rum inside the sill, then the door shut again. Porton shuffled over to the bucket, drank and grinned.

"Blood o' the buccaneers, this is," he said. "We 'll do yet."

He swigged off a second drink and went back to his corner; in ten minutes he was off in a sleep begotten of rum and fear and pain. Etion rose and bent over him, then touched Tom's arm and held out to him the little canvas wallet that he had found outside the hut.

"At man Porton drap 'is, Cap'n," he whispered. "I got him now."

"What the devil did you want it for?" demanded Tom.

Etion looked astounded.

"How can make *ouanga* widout thing that b'long man?" he asked. "To make strong *ouanga* must have some thing that b'long man. Mus' be touched wid sweat an' blood. You not know *ouanga*, Captain?"

"I'm damned if I do."

"Ouanga ees debbil charm," quoth Etion. "Maybe you want put curse on man, you get some t'ing b'long him, take hairs from his head an' beard. Dey work for sure. Blood better still. Give to *papaloi* an' *papaloi* make *ouanga*."

Tom laughed. He remembered hav-

ing heard old Ben Ives and his father tell of the unbelievable things done by the Negro *papaloi*, the medicine men in the back-country in Haiti. He did not believe it, of course, but he felt that he must placate old Etion who did believe. He took the canvas wallet from Etion and opened it. It was a roughly made sort of a pocket-book, with two inside pockets that were stuffed with papers. He turned it over listlessly. He was not interested in it, though Etion had considered it so important. His mind was on other things. God! If he only had this devil Porton where he could exact full payment. Tom did not especially care about Porton's crimes against society; he was concerned with his offenses against the house of Swayne that he had robbed and against the boy whom he had murdered. He meant to call Porton to account for that. If he could only catch Porton on blue water, Porton in his accursed *Bristol Slut*—and he, Tom, in the *Scorpion*, well to windward . . . .

"I'll get him yet," he muttered. If he ever draws clear of this lee shore I'll work him up like a bale of spun yarn—Hello! What's this?"

It was a many-folded, crackling paper that fell from the wallet as he turned it over and over in his hands. He picked it up and examined it. It was a rough sketch, drawn on heavy watered paper backed with yellow linen and stained by sweat and use. As he unfolded it a few words stood out plainly.

ANCHORAGE OF EL CUBIL.

Tom let go a gusty oath and Etion started.

"Look here," Tom pointed to the sketch. "This is better than any *ouanga*, Etion. This is a map that tells us how to get to his hiding place, where he has his prisoners and his loot. It'll take me to El Cubil if we ever get back to the *Scorpion*."

"Easy do that," said Etion. "Only one man at door. Dem walls all stone but de roof him made ob thatch. We go w'en you say, Cap'n."

Tom studied the thick thatch of the roof. It was old and torn and in one place he could see the sky. A star shone square overhead. To get out through the roof would not be difficult. He motioned to Etion and took his stand under the hole, while Etion, agile as a monkey, swarmed up his shoulders and reached with both hands at the roof.

That thatch came away at first in handfuls of dirt and dust, then in tufts of dry grass and palm leaves. Finally a two-foot hole yawned above them. Outside the yelling and the raucous laughter still kept up.

Etion ran to the door and glanced through a crack.

"More men come," he said. "'At mean more rum, Cap'n. W'en they all drunk we go. W'at about dis?" He pointed at Porton.

Tom hesitated. What about Porton? Etion chortled:

"Jorveaux saw him in pieces bimeby."

That was true. It was also true that Tom knew that he could not leave even Long-twelve Porton to such a death. He had seen a part of the devilish tortures inflicted by that blood-mad crew. Even Porton must be saved from that. He leaned over him and shook him into consciousness. Porton sat up dazedly.

"Keep quiet if you love life," said Tom fiercely. He was doing a thing he hated. Every instinct was to leave Porton—but he could not do that. "The crowd's drunk outside," he said. "We've dug a hole in the roof. It's our only chance. God help us if we fail now. Up with you."

Porton knew what failure meant for him, at least. He rose, twitched at his belt and they joined Etion.

"Etion first," said Tom. "He's lightest. You go after him. When you're up, low-

er your belt for me. I'll need a hand-hold."

At a word Etion scrambled to Tom's shoulder, leaped for the roof, caught it with both hands and disappeared in the dusk. He thrust his skinny arms back and pulled Porton scuffling to the thatch; then the belt was lowered to Tom. A moment later the three men lay low on the roof, watching the drunken Negroes at the fires.

"Slide down on the dark side," muttered Tom. "It's only a few yards to the jungle's edge."

A quick slide, a rustling fall and Etion was down. Tom went next and Porton fell on him like an avalanche. Keeping to the low brush, they slipped into a narrow jungle path and stopped.

"What now?" growled Porton. "There is no safety this side of the French lines."

"There's none there for me," said Tom briefly.

"That's my port," said Porton. "But they'll shoot you when they know you're a Yankee. You better hide till you kin get away by sea. You said you've got a schooner off the coast. Can you get to her?"

"I don't know. I'll have to," said Tom grimly. What a fool he was, he thought, to let this damned pirate go. He might never have another chance to square accounts. And he already had the chart to El Cubil. With Porton gone he could make his way to the *Scorpion*, get to El Cubil and loot the place, save his father. Damn Porton. Why could he not forget Porton? "Etion'll come with me," he said.

"All right," said Porton, "Hi 'ope our courses cross later. Hi owes you one fer this. What's your name, mister? What did you say 's the nyme o' yer schooner?"

"Iris. Fore-top-sail schooner," lied Tom glibly.

"You're damned decent fer a Yankee," muttered Porton. He passed into the thick brush and spoke over his shoulder. "The on'y other Yankee I knowed was the skipper of that damned bark *Catherine* I took, Nyme o' Swayne, it was. Him I was holdin' fer a ransom . . . "

Was holding! What terrible significance lay behind that past tense? It struck Tom like a blow. He repeated the words and did not know that he had done so.

"Aye." Porton spoke carelessly. "I landed 'em all three—the Yankee skipper, the lobster-back an' 'is daughter. Good-lookin' piece she is, too—a bit o' fire an' flame if you ask me. That skipper made a damned fool o' hisself, count o' seein' me make a bit free with the girl.

"He's just a plain fool. When I take a woman she's mine. That Yankee with his prayer-meetin' notions mixed in once too often. He'll not do it again. But, damn it all, he was worth a big fat ransom to me. He got his payment."

"What?" Tom's mouth was harsh and dry and little flashes of light seemed to break inside his head.

"A half ounce o' lead where it done him most good," said Porton.

The brush crackled. The bamboos rustled like iron rods as they clicked into place behind him. The next moment he was gone and the blackness of the jungle swallowed him.

CHAPTER IX

LETTERS OF MARQUE

THEY headed into the very heart of the jungle and worked their way along narrow paths. Great trees, heavy with wide-mouthed orchids, overhung them; thorny vines snatched at them. They were half naked when they debouched upon a coral beach, on which a ripple of low surf broke. The starlight, dim

enough in the jungle, seemed like dawn to them and the sea-rim stood out against the sky as though drawn in India ink. Tom threw himself face down on the beach and stared off into the night. If the schooner was in the offing his eyes would pick her up against the horizon. There was nothing. The ring of the horizon was unbroken. His heart sank as he turned to Etion.

"We'll get back to those coco-palms," he said. "We'll need the nuts when the sun rises. We dare not come into the open by daylight to look for food and drink."

They went back for the clump of palms, returned back for the beach with arms full.

"Keep to the loose dry sand," Tom cautioned. "We must not leave footprints. We must hide till we find some way to get away."

They found a hiding place among some great rocks on a little point that jutted out in a miniature cape; and they lay hidden there all day. Night brought relief and they bathed several times in the sea and ate the coconuts they had brought.

The sun rose on an empty sea in a blaze of white-hot mist that gave way to a copper glare; they baked under it until a wind from the sea blew a ten-minute rain squall. They alternately stewed and roasted till the sun dropped behind the line of the jungle and they waked to life once more.

"We'd better get as far from here as we can," said Tom. He had been pondering all day long what had happened and considering their best plan of escape. By himself Etion would have had no trouble but he refused to leave Tom. Tom turned to him.

"Look here, Etion," he said. "What did you do with that canvas wallet?"

"Put *ouanga* in him," said Etion. "I put de *ouanga* in de wallet an' put de wallet back in Porton's shirt. If 'e French ever see 'at dey know Porton been in touch wid enemies ob France."

Dodging in and out of the brush—for they dared not travel continuously on the open beach—they covered several miles; but it was not until late afternoon that Etion, as they rounded a rocky point, gave a low whoop of delight.

"Dere's a piroque, Cap'n," he said.

It was not much, but the sight of that piroque filled Tom's heart with joy. The sea was in his very marrow and the thought that he could seek safety on blue water was a delight to him. It was an ordinary fisherman's canoe, some eighteen feet long; it had been hollowed by fire and adze from a single cottonwood log, but it was seaworthy and it held a net and a pair of paddles. Tom leaped for it, thrust it into deep water, put his load of coconuts in the stern-sheets and almost threw Etion into it. Then he waded knee-deep in the warm water, stepped over the low gunwale and picked up a paddle, while Etion took the other and settled himself cross-legged in the bow.

"If'n 'em men o' Jorveaux's is in de bresh dey may see us," he said warningly.

"No matter now. They can't walk on the water." Tom's voice rose on a jubilant note. "They may find another canoe, but we've got to risk that."

They made a good offing. To help matters out for food and to deceive any one who might see them, Tom lay down; Etion laid the net and took a paddle and sat hunched up in the boat as any fisherman would have sat watching his nets.

The day seemed a million years long. Both men grunted with relief as the sun began to drop behind the distant tree-line.

"Well, Etion—" Tom rose and stretched to his full height. "—I reckon we've got to risk another night ashore. We'll need fire to cook these fish and we've got to have some more coconuts

—Good God," he said sharply, "What's that?"

Etion's incurious gaze followed Tom's finger that pointed seaward; then he gave a little cry and sprang to his feet, staring at a silver point against the eastern skyline.

"That's a sail, Etion." Tom almost upset the crazy piroque as he drove his paddle deep. "There's only one thing that catches sunlight like that—new canvas. That's the head of a fore-and-aft sail catchin' the settin' sun!"

THEY paddled hard for an hour; inch by inch the silver point rose. First it was one point, then two. It meant nothing much to Etion but Tom's heart swelled.

"Look," he shouted jubilantly. "Can't you see, boy? That's the head of a fore-and-aft foresail. We only saw one spot o' light at first, because she was headin' right for us. Then she bore off a bit and we opened her mainsail. That's a fore-and-aft schooner—and an American."

Etion shook his head. "Most likely French, Cap'n," he said. "Hard to see so far away."

"Not a bit of it. Only Americans use cotton canvas for sails. That canvas is as white as snow. English canvas or French or Spanish would be more brown than white. Wait a bit! She's headin' right for us, but she's not sighted us yet. There comes the terral," he said as the land-wind began to make off the land. "That'll mean a shift of helm for her." He watched eagerly till the schooner headed off a little and he got a slant at her from a different angle. He took one long look from under his hand, then sat down and began to paddle frantically.

"That's my own schooner, the *Scorpion,*" he said breathlessly. "Look at that patch in the foot of the main topmast staysail."

Etion grunted, none the wiser, while Tom went on:

"See that patch o' new canvas? I cursed Flynn for that. One day back home he forgot to take the staysail off her when we tacked. The fore-gaff tore hell out of it. That's the *Scorpion,* Etion. Head up for her."

Under the urge of Tom's tongue Etion worked like two men and the little piroque danced like a chip in a spill-way as the *Scorpion,* running free, drove down on her. A sharp yell from the schooner's bows made Jerry Lynn, on the quarter-deck, stop in his short stride. Then he leaped forward. A little later the *Scorpion* ran up well to windward, luffed and lay with her head sails shaking, the piroque dancing in the broken water under her lee. Every man of the schooner's crew lined the rail and a long yell went up when Tom, followed by Etion, climbed aboard. The next moment Lynn had Tom by both hands and Ives came running from the bows.

"Lord, sir, but we're glad to have you back." Ives' voice told more than his mere words. "What happened, sir?"

"Come down into the cabin," said Tom. "I've got a lot to tell you. First of all, where's de Berrien?"

"Sulkin' in the cuddy," Lynn grinned. "He's sore as a blind bear. At first he made a lot o' trouble but old Ben here cracked him over the bows with a caulkin' mallet. After that he saw the light."

"What did he have to say?" asked Tom.

"I'd hate to repeat it to you."

Lynn grinned. "In English it 'd sound just too bad. In French it sounded like five cats fightin'. I gather that, bein' a Frog, he can't understand what right we had to take him prisoner. It would have been all right to ketch King George or President Adams but to ketch *him* was the sin against the Holy Ghost."

"I'll see him," said Tom: "You and Ives come with me."

SEATED at the litle cabin table, Alphonse de Berrien, Demi-Brigadier of the French armies, Military Governor of Haiti, glanced up as the three men entered the cabin. He was a portly man, used to good living; and his resentment at having been snatched away from it was evident. At sight of the three men he burst into a torrent of invective. Tom smiled at him and waited for the storm to subside. Then:

"Do you speak English?" he asked.

General de Berrien nodded. "What does this outrage mean, m'sieur?"

"Outrage?" Tom grinned. "Faith, sir, it means that an American privateer has had the brazen effrontery to raid a French port and to carry off its governor as a prisoner. It may mean more than that, General de Berrien. War exists between your country and mine. I am an American privateer. I hold letters of marque, properly made out by my government, authorizing me to follow out any emprise of war. Under those letters, I can take, burn and destroy all property of the enemy and sequestrate any property found under his flag. I will show you my letters if you doubt what I say."

General de Berrien made a motion of dissent. Tom went on:

"I am doing to you exactly what you yourself have authorized Porton to do to us. Long-twelve Porton, the most notorious pirate the Spanish Main has seen since the days of Carew and Frome. This man Porton was with you. Three nights ago. He dined with you."

"You are wrong, sir." General de Berrien almost spat in high disgust. "It is true that he was brought to see me at my office. He came to me to deal with me about certain ships that. . . ."

"Aye. Ships of Spain. Cargoes of arms and powder that he took from Spain and was planning to sell to the slaves in revolt in Haiti. I tell you, General, the man took them from a Spanish ship. He made war under French colors on a friendly nation with whom it will be suicidal for France to have armed conflict. He has planned to sell those arms to the slaves."

General de Berrien's face turned a deep mulberry color; his lips set.

"You seem to believe what you tell me, *monsieur*," he said. "I ask where you learned this, or think you learned it."

"I will lay all my cards on the table. First, please remember this: I have no reason to lie to you. I went ashore at Jacmel three nights ago with the intent of capturing you if possible. I needed a man of weight and influence and I selected you.

"As we were returning to my boat, you will remember, we were attacked by a raiding party of ex-slaves. They too had planned to capture you—and incidentally to raid the French lines for arms.

"They missed you, whom I had already taken prisoner, but they did manage to capture the Porton. I can give you the details of what happened because I was there and heard and saw all that took place. Wait just a moment."

AT a signal Tom's steward got out a bottle of white rum and set it with glasses and cool water on the table. Tom spoke anew. Carefully avoiding any reference to the taking of the French merchantman, he gave all the rest of the details and painted a word picture of his shore adventure that made General de Berrien sit up. He told how Jorveaux had made his deal with Porton for the arms on the *Belle of Bristol*, how Porton had agreed to sacrifice his entire crew to earn his own safety. He concluded with:

"I think you know now, *Monsieur*, how and where these slaves get the arms that make it possible for them to commit crimes that offend the world. They

get them from Porton. He sends his partner, Batten, to discover the sailing dates of ships going under neutral flags; then, with his own ship under French colors, he takes those ships. He has been robbing and killing citizens of countries with whom France certainly can not desire to go to war."

"From all of which," said de Berrien: "I gather that you, sir, have some personal grievance against this Porton."

"I have, sir. He owes me a debt so great that I can hope you will not be present when it is paid." A spasm twisted Tom's face. "In the meantime, Mr. Lynn," he said with a return to his best quarter-deck manner, "will you kindly set all sail and give the steerman a course that will bring us in to Jacmel? We will run in under a flag of truce, sir."

"What the devil. . . .?" Jerry Lynn stared at him as though he believed his captain had lost his mind and Ives sat astounded. But Tom merely grinned and nodded confirmation of his order. Lynn went slowly on deck and Ives and de Berrien sat eyeing Tom in silence. They could not fathom what was to come.

"And now about my ransom, sir," said the Frenchman.

"There is no question of ransom, General," said Tom. "I had certain plans for which your presence was necessary. I tell you frankly, sir, that I intended to exchange you for Porton. These plans have now been changed and your presence is not necessary to me. I shall enter Jacmel harbor under a flag of truce and my boat will set you ashore. I can only say, sir, that I regret that exigencies of war have made necessary the hardships to which you have been subjected."

The Frenchman sat astounded. For a while words failed him. Then:

"Sir," he began. And again: "Sir . . ." He could say no more. Tom waved a hand and refilled both glasses. "I have not told you all, sir, because my personal affairs would only embarrass you. My account lies with this man Porton. All else fades into insignificance. My chief difficulty lies in the fact that I can not meet Porton on the high seas. He keeps under the protection of your batteries."

"Not now, *Monsieur.*" General de Berrien uttered a sharp oath. "True, the man has carried on his operations under letters of marque issued to him under my own hand and seal. But under those letters he has made war on friendly governments. He has given or sold arms to the foes of France. He has killed women and children. Can you doubt, *Monsieur,* what I will do? The moment I am free I will declare this man Porton to be the pirate that he has proved himself."

"Steady, sir." Tom smiled a little. "You have but my unsupported word. Will you hear what a free Negro has to say? He may perhaps be known to you. His name is Etion. He knows much that took place."

"Etion le Grand? He was the body servant to Monsieur Le Gai and was sent to France on the brig *Le Cref de Foret.* How is Etion here?"

"He shall tell you himself, General. I trust he will convince you that I have not lied to you. In any case I will land you at Jacmel."

Tom summoned Etion and left. In half an hour Etion came out of the cabin and was followed by de Berrien. Tom, after a look at him, motioned to Lynn.

"Helm over," he said. "And give her all she'll carry. Head for Jacmel."

They raised the red-and-white-and-yellow houses just before dusk. The two big French frigates to port and starboard of the big yellow corvette loomed like ships of the line. At sight of a white flag fluttering on the *Scorpion,* a boat shot from the *Quai des Marines* and, after a moment of tangled speech, hooked on to the *Scorpion's* rail. Then General de Berrien rushed on deck and

flung his arms about Tom, who stood by the weather rail. The little Frenchman dropped all English as he almost embraced his captor:

"*Adieu, mon brave,*" he said; then, with a quick rush of words, "This man Porton shall never find refuge under French colors."

The boat dropped away from the rail and Lynn turned to Tom, who was studying the corvette through half-closed eyes.

"WELL," said Jerry. "I suppose this all means somethin' —but not to me."

"Porton will never again be given asylum in a French port," said Tom. "I landed de Berrien to assure myself of that. I didn't need him, Jerry. Make sail, if you please."

Lynn turned away and motioned to a man to douse the white flag. The sails filled and before either of the French frigates realized that an American privateer had been under their very guns, the *Scorpion,* on a taut bowline, was heading out of the bay, her rail lined with grinning faces. Tom headed again for the cuddy and stopped the steward, who was removing the glasses.

"We'll want another caulker of rum," he said. "Now, Jerry, I'll explain."

"You'd better," said Jerry glumly. "When you let that Frog go you threw away two thousand dollars."

Tom laughed and flung on the table the chart taken from Porton.

"There's the chart of the only anchorage at El Cubil," he said. "We'll beat Porton to his hidin' place. We'll loot it and pick up Porton at sea. The Frenchman will chase him out of the port. I doubt if Porton himself will escape from those Negroes. In any case we will release his prisoners—if he hasn't killed them." And he told Lynn of Porton's last words.

"If he does escape he'll head at once for this El Cubil," said Jerry. "That's sure. What now?"

"Run up the coast. Water the ship and get wood for the galley," said Tom. "They'll not follow us now. Then we'll shape a course for El Cubil. We'll strip the place as empty as a rat-ridden hold. We'll take his loot and free his prisoners. And if we have any luck, we'll meet Long-twelve Porton at sea. At sea, Jerry, with the *Scorpion* well to windward and Ben Ives, with his long twenty-four, against that mouthful of brass teeth I saw grinning at us from the *Bristol Slut!*"

(To be continued)

G. Frederic Pelham, Jr.

THE KITTEN

REPORT—To Colonel T. Everett Aplin, D. S. O., Commanding Officer, King's Royal Rifles, B. E. F. August 20th, 1918.

Between one and two o'clock on the morning of August 10th, Lieutenant H. C. Darrington, M. C., accompanied by Sergeant James Hanley and twelve men of the regimental scout platoon, left our lines for the purpose of entering and bombing the enemy works known as the Essen Redoubt. There was no other activity on this sector of the front on the night in question. Troops holding the front lines, although aware of the intended raid, heard no firing or bombing in the vicinity of the enemy trenches until 4:45 A.M. when the barrage which preceded our scheduled attack opened.

Captain Henry M. Johnson, commanding elements of the King's Royal Rifles in the subsequent assault, reports that, while advancing through the enemy positions, he came upon the bodies of Lieutenant Darrington, Sergeant Hanley and eleven men, in a firing bay of the Enemy's Second Line. Sgt. Hanley and the eleven men had been stripped of puttees and equipment, and shot through the head. The body of Lieutenant Darrington was found with an empty automatic pistol by its side.

A hurried inspection, made at the time by Capt. Johnson, and later verified by the burying detail, disclosed no evidence of any wounds upon the body of the officer. From the condition of the wounds of the sergeant and the other men, it was evident that they had been recently shot to death at close quarters. Lieutenant Darrington, though apparently unwounded, appears to have met his death before the others, as, in his case alone, rigor mortis had already set in.

The thirteenth man who is known to have accompanied Lt. Darrington that morning is missing and unaccounted for. From the scout platoon records, and from

the report of the burying detachment that interred the bodies, the missing man is apparently one Private Harry Martin, 2nd Company, attached to the scout platoon.

As all the members of this scout platoon—with the possible exception of Private Martin—perished that morning, or had been killed or evacuated previously to it, no other evidence is at this time available.

(Signed) CAPTAIN O. H. JENNINGS,
C. O. Intelligence Section.

PRIVATE HARRY MARTIN'S STORY

(As given to Colonel T. Everett Aplin, D. S. O., six months later.)

IT'S all a bit foggy now, sir, but I think I can give you the main facts. It hardly seems possible that all those fine chaps could have been done-in the way you say. And poor Mr. Darrington, such a splendid gentleman, really. I never thought Jerry would ever put his star up. He seemed to have a charmed life. You'll pardon me, sir, but the whole thing has come as a bit of a shock. I never dreamed that such a thing could happen. Although conditions *were* a bit out of the ordinary that night. You see, sir, the lieutenant wasn't in the habit of taking more than one or two men out with him—five at the most—and we used to take turns. I'd been out with him any number of times. Our methods were always about the same and we all knew his ways, and thought the world and all of him.

Whenever he had decided to go out on a job, those of us whose turn it was to accompany him, would line up behind him and crawl on hands and knees into No Man's Land as far as we could go. Then we'd wiggle forward on our bellies —one behind the other—each with his left hand on the foot of the bloke ahead, our pistols ready, and a bag of grenades slung in back. Mr. Darrington used to signal to us by clicking the finger nails of his thumb and third finger. Like this! When we got near Jerry's lines, he used to stop now and then.

He was most cautious and, though he had no fear whatever, sir, he never took unnecessary chances. He'd click once if he wanted us to come up in line on the left, and twice to come up on the right, and so on—whatever signals he'd arranged beforehand. When he had us in position, all headed toward the spot we were to bomb, he'd scrape his fingernail across his helmet—slow like. That was the signal for each man to get his grenades ready, take a bomb, pull the pin, and stand ready to let fly. Then we'd wait until he yelled "Throw," "Fire," or some such command, and we'd raise up and let them have it.

The first couple of flashes usually gave us our target and we'd peg till our bombs were gone and then scatter and sneak back as best we could. It wasn't difficult, sir, for we always surprised them, and they rarely had an opportunity to defend themselves. But oftentimes we'd have to lay low outside the wire for some hours before the machine-guns stopped traversing and the shell-fire died down. That was the main danger.

Then we'd sneak back. And Mr. Darrington always tried to get back into our own lines without being challenged. In fact after we'd left the fixed trench lines and were working in the open, he considered it downright disgraceful for us to be seen or heard even by our own outposts. And we all got to be right smart at our jobs; Jerry didn't get on to us often.

Fact is, we lost very few men while patrolling or raiding. Mr. Darrington had a keen nose for defiladed ground, even at night, and he moved about like a ghost. The men got to know him as the Kitten, which while not very respectful-like, certainly fit him to a tee. He was a mighty slick article, sir, 'pon my word. You could hear the others now and

again, but you could never hear him.

But you want to hear about what happened that last night. You'll have to pardon me, sir, if I ramble a bit, but now that I'm on it, it all comes back very clear.

Well, sir, you see we had been out every night for weeks and we'd lost a lot of men—mostly from shell fire. We lost far more that way than when out with Mr. Darrington. As a matter of fact, by that time there were only thirteen of us left, including Sgt. Hanley. Well, sir, late that afternoon Mr. Darrington came back and told us he was going to take the whole lot of us out that night. He didn't seem to be quite himself as he was describing the job to us. We had never attempted anything just like it before and we didn't care for it even a little bit. I don't think that he did either, but he was determined to go through with it and went to no end of trouble to explain and describe everything.

After dark he went up to the line again with Sgt. Hanley to explore a gap he had found under the German wire. The gap had been caused by water running out of a drain in the low part of the enemy trench. The drain, a narrow sort of gully-like, started from under the wire, where it had washed away the dirt, and ran back to the front edge of the parapet. It was about five feet deep at that point, I should judge. Then it went into a tunnel—some ten feet long—that connected with the floor of the trench and just large enough for a man to crawl through.

The plan was for us to slip under the wire and wait in the gully while "The Kit"—beg pardon, sir—while the lieutenant went ahead and had a look about. If the trench was unoccupied, he was to crawl in and make sure that the coast was clear. Then he was to click twice as a signal for us to follow him through the drain and into the trench.

That is—all except me. I was to stay behind, just inside the wire, as a lookout. He gave the men strict orders to have their pistols ready at all times and for each man to pull the pin of a bomb and stand ready the instant he had cleared the drain. When they were all in, they were to follow Mr. Darrington down the trench until they located Jerry. Every hundred paces or so the last man was to drop off and remain behind to act as a guard, so the main party couldn't be taken by surprise from the rear.

If the trench was occupied, and he couldn't get in through the drain, he was to scrape his helmet as a signal for us to spread out along the parapet and give it to them over the top. Well, sir, he had us go over it a dozen times until each one of us knew precisely what was expected of him.

At about 1:30 we started out. It was quiet as death that night and Mr. Darrington was quite up the pole about it. You see, sir, a bit of noise along the front was an excellent thing for our little business. But as luck would have it, there wasn't a sound. I was the last man in the line and it seemed to me that the chaps up ahead were clumping along like draught horses. And after we'd gotten pretty close to Jerry's wire, and started crawling, the noise was downright hideous.

Perhaps it was just a case of nerves, sir, for I don't mind admitting now, that I had more than a bit of wind up. You see, the stillness was something new to us and I had a feeling in my bones that we were headed for trouble.

BUT things went along all right and after a time we got to the gap and through the wire. Mr. Darrington clicked for us to stop and, 'pon my word, sir, that click sounded like a rifle shot. We crouched in the gully and waited while he went ahead. We could tell when he entered the drain, for his body blocked out the faint circle of light that showed through the further end.

He lay listening in the drain for quite a time. Then the light showed again and we knew he had gotten in all right. He took plenty of time looking around and it was several minutes before he appeared at the opening again and clicked twice. That was the signal for the rest of the men to follow him, and one by one they crawled in and disappeared.

When the last man had gotten through, I sat and waited. At first all was still, but after a time I heard some whispering and mumbling and moving about inside the trench. I knew from that that the Germans couldn't be anywhere about and I don't mind saying, sir, that I breathed a lot easier. Then it was quiet again for a while and I thought that they had gone on down the trench. But presently I heard two clicks and saw Mr. Darrington at the further end of the drain. I figured that he wanted me to come closer, so I crawled up the gully.

Presently he clicked again, so I stopped and he went away. Shortly after that I could hear them moving on down the trench toward the second line. I didn't mind waiting, for the worst part of it seemed to be over and I had already concluded that the Germans, who had been on the run for several days, had pulled a sneak-out on us. This, if I may say so, sir, was quite satisfactory to me.

But when the hours passed, and it started to get light, I began to have misgivings. I knew that nothing serious could have happened to them, for there hadn't been so much as a sound, but I figured that they ought to have been back by now. I had just begun to get nervous, when all at once our guns opened and dropped a barrage right on me. I tried to crawl up into the drain, but I don't know whether I ever got there or not, for the next thing I knew, I was in a hospital in Blighty and four weeks had been torn from the calendar. I was pretty badly shot up, sir, and it wasn't till well after the Armistice that I could really get around again.

You see, sir, we always removed all signs of identification except our number tags, when we patrolled, and as mine was shot away when I was wounded, nobody knew who I was until I had regained consciousness. I expect that's why you had so much trouble in tracing me.

But here I am, and those are the facts just as I've given them to you. I don't blame you for being puzzled, sir. The whole thing seems downright incredible. I know that nothing could have happened to them in the front line, and certainly I'd have heard the fuss even had they been attacked in the second line. I'm sure, sir, that no matter how they were caught, they must have been shot after our barrage started. Otherwise I'd have heard it. But how could Jerry have captured all thirteen of them without starting a fearful rumpus? And Mr. Darrington, with no wounds on him, and his own pistol by his side—and that empty.

As I say, sir, it don't seem possible. It all looks mighty queer. I know that every man-jack of them had his pistol cocked when he entered the drain. And I know that every man had a fused grenade in his right hand a second after he'd entered the trench. How Jerry could have jumped them is more than I can see. Certainly it seems as though there would have been hell to pay for at least a few minutes. And all shot in the head!

Mr. Darrington would never have done that, sir. And even had they found themselves hopelessly surrounded, they wouldn't have done away with themselves. They were fighters, those men, every damned one of them, and were quite accustomed to having the odds against them. And you say their puttees had been removed? What do you make of that, sir?

Well, I give it up, and I'm sorry I ever came to hear of it. It's set me back no end, I assure you. Poor Mr. Darring-

ton, such a splendid man! I wonder what it was that overtook him and the others? I hope, sir, if you ever do solve it, you'll be kind enough to let me know, for the question will plague me to my dying day.

All shot through the head? My, oh my! and the 'Kit'—er, Mr. Darrington—dead, with no wounds, and his empty gun beside him.

My God, sir, it's enough to drive a man mad!

THE STORY OF COLONEL T. EVERETT APLIN, D. S. O.

I SUPPOSE I should have dismissed the whole thing as just one more gruesome tragedy of the War had it not been for the fact that I had known "Darry" since a child. I went through school with his father and knew his mother when we were both in our teens.

As a boy, Darry wasn't like his two older brothers—who were always up to some sort of deviltry—but quiet and reserved and just a bit shy. He wasn't given to athletics, though he could sit a horse well enough, and I never dreamed of his becoming a soldier. He just didn't seem cut out for it. Perhaps it was precisely this fact that drew me to him. Soldiering is a good enough game for certain types, but Darry—well, Darry seemed destined for something better.

But the war sucked in all kinds alike and when he came out in '16 and was assigned to my regiment, I wasn't a bit pleased. You see, his being there brought to me a responsibility that wasn't quite in my line. I knew his folks expected me to keep an eye out for him and I also knew that a second lieutenant's chances on the Somme were rather less than slim. But I couldn't show any favoritism, and my only hope was that he'd soon receive some sort of cushy wound that would keep him out of it until the war was over, and still not handicap his future.

We were in a comparatively quiet sector when he joined us and I assigned him to A Company, to sort of feel him out. He didn't mix very well at first and, although he made no enemies, neither did he make any friends. From what I could gather, he preferred to be alone. Though he attended to his duties well enough, he spent most of his spare time on his own.

Then his outfit took over the front line and I heard that he had taken to patrolling. How it started, I don't know; but he rapidly developed a morbid liking for prowling around No Man's Land. One or two men from his platoon were drawn to him by some kindred spirit and it wasn't long before he was bringing in bits of very valuable information.

It was a job that the others were only too willing to turn over to him, for I've found that even the bravest men in an attack don't particularly relish crawling around between the lines in the dead of night. His quiet, nocturnal activities rather set him apart from the rest and, although the other young officers found it impossible to warm up to him, he was soon held in no small respect by every member of the regiment. During the day he was utterly unimpressive, but at night he took over the whole show.

I knew that, just before he came out, his first love affair had ended rather suddenly and, to him, disastrously; and I was afraid he was trying to end matters as quickly and quietly as possible. Some chaps did that, you know. So I called him to me one day and had a talk with him. He assured me that my fears were groundless. He explained that he realized only too well that he had never been cut out for a company officer. He was not a leader. Standing before his platoon, he felt embarrassed and out of place. But at night, alone, there were things he *could* do. He explained that he was simply trying to make up in one direction for what he lacked in the others.

From then on, whenever we took over a new sector, he went quietly to work. In no time, he knew every inch of the

German wire, the location of their listening posts and strong points, and the weak spots in their defenses. A little group soon grew up around him, and before long any patrolling required on our front was turned over to him.

In time, he came to be rather famous and, due to the uncanny quietness with which he left and re-entered our lines, he became known throughout the regiment as "The Kitten". At night the men in the front line kept one eye cocked on the sky and, when conditions were favorable, they knew very well that some time before dawn "The Kitten" was sure to strike at some point or another.

Then, before the big push in '17, orders came to bring in prisoners along the entire front, for the purpose of ascertaining the morale, condition, and general timbre of the troops opposite. Darry knew that I was planning an extensive raid, and set about getting the information I needed in order to carry the thing through successfully. Then, two days before the raid was to be sprung, he came to me with the request that he and a few of his fellow ghouls be entrusted with the job.

The enemy lines opposite were the strongest and most difficult to approach that we had ever faced. He pointed out that an extensive raid would disclose the coming attack, result in serious loss of life to the raiding party and, in all probability, fail to accomplish it purpose. My plans were so complete and extensive that I did not doubt as to the raid's success, but I had to admit that he was right on the first two counts. I felt sure that he would fail, for bombing an isolated post, and bringing back prisoners, are two very different things.

But he seemed so set upon it and pleaded so earnestly, that I finally gave in. Unknown to him, however, I went ahead with my plans just to be ready in the event that his attempt proved futile.

Well, gentlemen, it seems that his patrolling activities of the past week had put Jerry wise. At any rate, they knew something was up and were on the lookout. They must have received word of our plans, and were expecting a much larger raid. How he got into their trenches, I don't know, but seeing only four men, they let him come. They seemed to have known that the real raid was scheduled for the next night and, figuring that this was just another prowling party, they were reluctant to waste, on three or four men, the splendid ambush they had planned. It was precisely this that saved him.

But they underestimated "The Kitten", and when they did decide to quietly gather him in, they found they had struck a Tartar. When they jumped him, I was up forward listening and roundly cursing myself for having allowed him to go. It was all over in a second. A dozen grenades or so, a few pistol shots, one or two yells, and then—silence! No rockets went up, no barrage came over; whatever had happened, had happened quickly.

I waited around for half an hour and then went back to my P. C. I had never felt quite so low, and the looks in the eyes of the men that I passed as I made my way down the trench seemed to condemn me. It was the first time that I realized what a place Darry held in their hearts. I entered the P. C. sick all over, and just on the verge of a blue funk. But I hadn't had time to toss aside my helmet, when there was a commotion outside. I rushed out.

Down the trench, with two of his men, came "The Kitten"; and behind them, an excited, whispering mob that seemed to include the entire regiment. Darry and one of his men had been wounded, but the unwounded one was carrying a fourth man, and in the center of the group was a German sergeant.

The fourth man was found to be dead, but the Germans never had the pleasure of burying him. Darry and the two others had seen to that. They had fought

their attackers off, broken contact, and sneaked back to our lines with a prisoner and their dead companion.

A few minutes later, Darry went back to the hospital knowing full well that I'd soon have an M. C. coming down to him.

THE German sergeant was soon induced to talk. You may be sure that I listened to his story with profound interest. It seems that they were fully aware of our plans for the next night, and well prepared to meet them. If what he told me was the truth, we wouldn't have stood a ghost of a chance. The raiding party would have been annihilated.

Darry's wound healed quickly. He was back in ten days and going right at it again. He was more than a hero now! He was a legend! Every man along that entire section of the front knew about the Kitten of the King's Royal Rifles.

After the disasters of the Spring of '18, we took hold again and fought our way back to our old positions. Jerry was feeling the strain and by summer we had broken through his lines and the trench warfare had given way to one of movement. This suited Darry perfectly, so I got him a pip and put him in charge of the regimental scout platoon with orders to do as he saw fit.

Well, gentlemen, the job had been made for him, and he found himself right in his element. In no time he had molded his little force into the deadliest night fighting-machine on the Western Front. He and his handful of men ranged up and down the enemy lines dealing death and destruction nearly every night. Calls for his services came from every company in the regiment. I take my oath that it seemed to me that he was beating the German Army single-handed.

Due to his activities, our line was always out ahead. Our attacks went further and our losses were fewer. I don't know how many machine-guns he put out of action the night before our attacks, but I do know, that time and time again, when the King's Royals went forward next morning, they found the guns that had been holding them up were manned only by the dead.

We pushed ahead until August, when we ran up against a nasty little system of trenches that succeeded in stopping our advance. The lines on our right and left were still going forward and I knew that the trench position couldn't hold out long without taking the risk of being surrounded. But we were a proud and cocky outfit, and not accustomed to lagging behind the rest of the line, so I decided not to wait, and ordered a stiff barrage and concentrated attack for the morning of August 10th.

I knew nothing of Darry's plan. If I had, I certainly would have stopped it. It was gallant and courageous, but foolhardy and unnecessary nevertheless. Normally I would have been advised of it, but we were going hammer and tongs at the time, and I frankly admit that I didn't always know just what Darry was doing.

But I'll never forget that night! Mail came up just before we went over, and I took a moment off to rest my nerves and read a note from Darry's father. He hadn't heard from Darry for some weeks and was worried. He hoped I'd be able to get word to his son that the girl back home had changed her mind and was ready, whenever Darry was, to announce their engagement. Perhaps the M. C. had something to do with that. But there was a far more important engagement for me to think about just then, and, for a moment, I forgot it.

It wasn't until the next evening that word came to me of Darry's death. I had long since learned to take the news of the death of a lifelong friend as a matter to be regretted, but expected. But this was different. Darry—the Kitten—wasn't just a man; wasn't just a friend! He was the regiment!

It was an unspeakable disaster! Of

course we went right on. But it wasn't the same. The dash and spirit of the men were gone. They did their hideous work doggedly and well, but without the old-time zest and pride. The focal point, the nucleus of the regiment's interest—from myself to the newest recruit—had suddenly ceased to exist!

The Kitten and his quiet midnight murderers were no longer with us. Stripped of their equipment and shot in the face! And what of Darry? With his empty pistol in his hand and no mark on his boyish body!

But as the days went by and the mystery of his death remained unsolved, the sadness of the men's loss changed into a maniacal resentment. The regiment rose with an overwhelming lust for revenge. And I feel sure that, in the days and nights that followed, many a weary, panic-stricken German met his death on the point of a bayonet, instead of loafing in a prison pen, as he might have done had Darry lived.

When things quieted down a bit, I did what I could to ascertain the facts. You have read the report that my inquiries brought forth. Time added nothing to it. It only confirmed the tales of the men, and added to the mystery.

But the question never quite left my mind, and later—much later—when the war was over and I was back in mufti again, I sought to find out what had become of the missing thirteenth man. Well, I found him, and you have heard his story. Make what you will of it. It helped me not at all.

And now there seems to be no other trail to follow. I have listened to many explanations, but, knowing Darry and his men as I did, none of them seems quite plausible. So, I suppose, we'll have to let it rest as just one of the many unsolved mysteries of the War. But I would certainly like to know just what did happen. Twelve men shot in the head, and Darry dead, with no wound upon him, and his empty pistol by his side. God Almighty!

THE STORY OF AUGUST SCHMITT

Formerly Corporal in the Prussian Guards, "The Kaiser's Own"

IT WAS in July that the luck started to turn against us. By August the whole picture had changed. We were up against the English, and a crack regiment at that. This outfit had developed a method of night raiding that had been playing the devil with our morale. They struck like lightning and gave us no peace. Some of our younger troops had gone yellow. Even the old-timers were jumpy when opposite them.

We were in trenches on a hill. Good trenches and good wire. I was on watch in the front line. It was dark and I couldn't see so well because the ground sloped down from our trench. So I slid out over the top and lay in the grass. A drain went out under our parapet and into a gully that ran down to our wire. About nine o'clock, I heard a faint click out in front.

What was it? I wondered. Maybe a strand of wire slipped. Maybe some poor wounded fellow is trying to get back to our lines. But I watch to make sure. There was no moon, but the stars were out. Then I see a shadow. It is in the gully just inside the wire.

I watch. After some time, the shadow moves. It moves closer to me, up the gully. I put my sights upon it. No use taking any chances. It keeps coming. Soon I can make it out. It is a man. He is below me now, where the gully is deep. This is no wounded comrade. This is an Englishman, and very likely one of the accursed night murderers we have been trying to bag for so long. I press my trigger slowly. His time has come!

But I hear two more clicks further away. It is a signal. I must be very wary. Perhaps there are others. I am

in an exposed position and one grenade would finish me. I release the pressure on the trigger and wait. Another shadow comes forward. It joins the first. They lay peering at the drain that runs into our trench. Another click! They start to slide back. I press the trigger again! But something tells me no!

A better plan forms in my head. Here, I say to myself, is where I get a sergeant's job! To kill one of these raiders would certainly be something. But to catch them alive would be more. So I lay low. They slide away noiselessly. Good thing I came out here. From the fire step I would have seen nothing. They would have returned later on and snuffed us out in precisely the same way they have done so many times before. I give them plenty of time to get away. Then I slip back into the trench and spread the news.

These fellows, I tell my comrades, were just looking the ground over. And they were clever—believe me!—as quiet as cats. They will come again, probably four or five of them. I know their signals. Two clicks—advance! One click—retreat! Our sergeant is excited and is all for lining up out in the grass and shooting them when they come into the gully. Bah! This would be foolish! Shoot at them and get killed by the answering shower of grenades. In the end he listens to reason.

There are fourteen of us. Quickly I tell them my scheme. I will wait outside the parapet until they return. Then I will slide back and give the warning. Beyond doubt they will try to enter through the drain if they think that the trench is unoccupied. To do this, they will have to enter one by one. We will line up on each side of the entrance and, as they come in, we will clip them in back of the head with a—well, it must not make a noise.

My brain is working fast. I have an idea. I wrap my heavy trench knife with my first aid bandage. That will do the trick. A sharp blow hardly makes a sound. After we clip the first one we will take him by the arms and pull him in to one side and pass him along. He will have no equipment other than his pistol and grenades, for otherwise he could not get through the drain.

The pistol is the thing to look out for. It must be grabbed at the very instant that the blow is delivered. If the blow is a good one, the pistol will not fire. Reflexes do not contract—they relax—from a blow at the base of the brain.

At each end of the bay, we will post a man with many grenades. If anything goes wrong, these men will throw rapidly into the gully. We should bag the first man, at any rate, and then, if necessary, we can meet the others with their own weapons. Perhaps we can bag more.

They agree to my plan. We take positions and rehearse. We will not need any help. We will tell no one. They might get jumpy and give away the show. This is our own little party.

Soon we are ready, and I climb out to my post. But not quite so far as before. Just far enough so I can see the gully where it is shallow by the wire. It is damp and cold and I have to fight to keep awake. I wait for hours.

It is absolutely quiet. I have not seen it this way since 1914. I close my eyes to rest them. One cannot stare forever without going blind. I open them again. At last! My blood boils and I stiffen. A shadow is in the gully just inside the wire. The shadow moves. That is enough for me. I slide back and give the alarm! Instantly every man becomes tense. It is quiet as death. We wait nervously. Perhaps they have heard me enter the trench and have been scared away.

But no! There is a click! Faint, but unmistakable. The stop signal! We wait again. How long! God knows! Each second is an hour! Then faint scrapings come from the drain. There is a man in it. He is coming nearer. More scraping—very faint, very cautious. Now his

head cannot be more than a foot inside the drain. He waits. We wait. Then a scrape and all at once his head and shoulders appear. Four hands move swiftly and there is a dull thud. Not loud, but —well, drop an orange on the floor.

He slumps. His helmet is in Paul's right hand and both wrists are caught in a vise. On the other side, Strumpf has the fellow's revolver and is quietly putting down his muffled trench knife. Then a heave. Slowly, deliberately, we pull him in and deposit him in the corner. The last man on the line gags him and stands by, ready to deliver another blow if necessary. The next two men step up to the drain. We wait and wait, but no more follow.

Himmel! I am a fool! Of course the others are waiting to find out if all is well. I exchange the Englishman's helmet for my own and show myself at the end of the drain. Then I click twice—with my finger nails, and step back. That fetches them! They come. Louder this time. They think the trench is empty and that there is nothing to fear. I am so happy, I could shout! No matter what happens now, I shall get my promotion!

Well, to make a long story short, there were thirteen of them all told. We thought they would never stop coming. But everything went like clockwork, although we never expected so many. The place was crowded, let me tell you. When we were sure they were all in, we didn't know what to do with them. Some of them were coming to life, so we bound and gagged each one. It was a good thing that they wore those long wrapped puttees or we would have run out of tying material.

Then a thought struck me. What if they have left a lookout outside? Might as well try for him, too. I still have on the English helmet, so I go to the drain and click twice. I wait, but no one comes. I click again, but nothing happens. They have not left a lookout. Good! And now we must not delay. Some of the men are so bitter that they want to kill them on the spot. I hush them abruptly. We must carry them back to the commander's dugout.

They agree. Each man shoulders a prisoner and we stagger to the rear.

BUT our luck has been too good. It can not last! Now it deserts us entirely. As we reach the support line, a lieutenant with many troops comes rushing up. There is an enemy attack coming! Every man to his post! There is not a minute to lose. This is no time for prisoners! The lieutenant orders us to drop them in the second line bay and post a guard! It is an outrage. I protest.

"Shut up!" he yells at me. "Obey orders! Every man to his post!"

"But how will we get them back?" I demand!

"What do you care? Kill the dogs if necessary! God knows they have killed enough of us. We may all be prisoners ourselves if we don't step lively."

My heart sinks. The guts seem to drain out of me. Am I to be cheated out of my glory? Scattered shelling begins. Lights go up. My comrades drop the prisoners and rush back to the front line. I stay where I am. It is a sinful shame that all this night's work should be wasted. I could cry with rage and disappointment. But it is getting light. I see one of my prisoners is an officer. I crouch beside him. He is dead. The first blow was harder than necessary. I curse! Death is far too good for him.

I rip off his bonds and search him. He is not a bad looking fellow, but not of the soldier type. Certainly not the kind you would expect to find on a job like this. I quickly inspect the others. Several seem to be dead also. Perhaps only unconscious. Some are awake and glaring at me with hateful eyes. My brain reels! I know how they feel! I am filled with hatred and loathing for them.

Many of my comrades have been killed by these men—struck down in the night with no chance to defend themselves!

The shelling is getting worse. I am nervous and unstrung. The world is a bedlam around me. I work feverishly! One of them is a sergeant! What a haul! One officer, one sergeant, and eleven men! And all for nothing! *Ach, Gott!*

But the strain is getting the best of me? The shells are coming closer. I am trembling with fear and excitement!

Then the world splits open and the English barrage is upon me. Not exactly on me, but on the front line. It is a bad barrage. Terrible! In a few moments I will be blown to pieces! What can I do! I must leave them or be killed. I have no longer strength enough to carry one of them! But if one of them could walk? Ah! Then I could take him back with me. I untie them with trembling fingers and try to pull them to their feet. It is useless. Some of their eyes are alive, but their bodies are dead! Paralyzed! I am sobbing hysterically. My head is ready to burst! But it is no use. Their legs will not support them.

I can wait no longer. Under this barrage, those who are not killed will have to retreat. Some of these prisoners may be rescued alive. It must not be! They must not live to kill again! The lieutenant has said to shoot them, if necessary. Now, there is no other way for it! It is up to me! But this is not me! This man is crazy! My muscles act as if guided by some outside force.

I take out my pistol. It shakes in my hand. A shell lands close! Dirt rains down upon me! I am laughing and crying in turn. As though in a dream, I stagger about and shoot them, one by one. Soon my magazine is empty. In my pocket is one of their pistols. I take it out. There is no time to pick the living from the dead! I finish my job!

I come to the young officer last. The other pistol is empty now. But he, I know, has been dead from the first. What a prize he would have been. *Ach, Gott,* that things should end this way! But I must go. I drop the pistol and sway drunkenly. I am weak and wet with sweat. My knees are knocking together!

Then all hell breaks loose! The barrage has lengthened and is upon me. Screaming men are running wildly up and down the trench. For an instant I lean against the wall and vomit.

Then I dash away! There is a fearful shriek and a splitting, blinding light.

Well, that is the end of the story. It all seems like a nightmare to me now. But some merciful fellows stopped long enough to carry me back. I woke up in the hospital. You can see for yourself what they did to me.

BOWIE AND HIS BIG KNIFE

A fact story by Meigs O. Frost

JIM BOWIE saw big money ahead for the first time in his life. It made him eloquent, facing his brothers, Rezin P. Bowie and John J. Bowie. All three had carved their little plantation out of virgin forest there by Bayou Boeuf in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. They had made some money out of their cotton crops. Jim had been away on a business trip down-river to New Orleans. Now he was revealing to Rezin and John that he had been to see Jean Lafitte at Galveston Island. He was arguing that they pool the money they had made on white cotton and plunge on black ivory—illegal Negro slaves out of Africa.

The three brothers had come up in the hard school of the frontier. Since their father, Rezin Bowie, married their mother, Elvira Jones Bowie, in Burke County, Georgia, the family had moved every time a neighbor's cabin got near enough so they could see his chimney-smoke. Old Rezin Bowie didn't like to feel crowded.

First to Tennessee. Then to Kentucky, where in Logan County Jim Bowie was born in 1796. Then to Missouri. Then down to Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, seeking fortune in that valley empire President Thomas Jefferson had bought in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. There, just past his eighteenth birthday in 1814, Jim Bowie had struck out for himself, staked a homestead by Bayou Boeuf. Near by on the Red River was Alexandria, the parish seat.

Now it was 1818. Jim Bowie at twenty-two loomed head and shoulders above his brothers, and they were no weaklings. But he stood six-feet-three. He weighed one hundred eighty-five pounds of bone, rawhide and steel wire. A thick, unruly shock of sandy hair topped his tall figure. His eyes were deep-set, gray, arresting. His hands were huge and hard, with fingers like steel hooks. Whipsawing boards does that to you—or kills you.

Rapides respected the youngster who at eighteen had cleared his own land

with an axe, and with one helper had whipsawed boards of the felled timber to get needed cash. They knew what that meant. You dug a sawpit, built a platform beside it. You hauled the heavy trunks and heaved them butt-down into the pit, leaning against the platform. Then, one man on the platform, one below, you hauled that heavy whipsaw back and forth endlessly until the logs were sawn boards. Then you lashed the boards into a raft. You rafted them on Bayou Boeuf, the Red River, the Mississippi River, to Alexandria or New Orleans, depending on the market; sold them and started back on foot, eyes alert and weapons ready for highwaymen. Then you went to work sweating out a cotton crop. It was money earned that way that Jim Bowie wanted his brothers to plunge with him on Jean Lafitte's black ivory.

Jean Lafitte was a name to thrill Louisiana youth then. He was Robin Hood reborn. Letters of marque from the young Republic of Cartagena in South America legalized his raids on Spanish maritime commerce. But everybody knew he never worried about flags, this buccaneer of Barataria, this plain pirate of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. He commanded a fast little fleet, heavily armed and manned. His first palisaded fort, warehouse, slave barracoons, rose on Grande Terre, a sandy sea island below Barataria, about one hundred miles southwest of New Orleans. He reached the city by his secret winding bayou channels. Merchants and planters eagerly bought his goods and slaves, far below market price.

He strolled New Orleans; he attended country balls in costly clothes, with gold-mounted weapons, gold jingling in his pockets. He paid New Orleans' most famous lawyer $20,000 gold to defend him, and won it back gambling. He recruited husky, adventurous country youth to his fleet. He helped the needy with lavish hand. He laughed at pompous authority, made others laugh.

Governor Claiborne plastered New Orleans with proclamations putting a price on his head, delivered at the Cabildo. Next night Jean Lafitte plastered the city with his own proclamations, putting a price on Governor Claiborne's head, delivered at Grande Terre. New Orleans, still irked at her sale to the young United States, roared with laughter. That was the way to treat that "'Merican *coquin*," that American rascal, the governor!

Jean Lafitte stirred their admiration. They knew that in the War of 1812 the British offered him pardon for his piracies, $30,000 gold, a captain's commission in the British Navy, if he would join them against the Americans, reveal his secret waterway to New Orleans.

They knew how he kept the British marking time while he warned Governor Claiborne and General Andrew Jackson, how Claiborne's thanks was a raid that looted and burned Grande Terre, how Jackson called him and his men "hellish banditti." They knew how, in spite of all that, Lafitte sent cannon and cannoneers, who fought the British at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815, side by side with Jackson and Claiborne in the same trench, while Lafitte guarded the Barataria waterway against British surprise.

The President of the United States, at Old Hickory's plea, had pardoned him for his piracies. But Jean Lafitte couldn't settle down. He sailed to Galveston Island off the Texas coast, built another fort, warehouse, slave barracoons, went sea-raiding again. Galveston Island was No Man's Land then. Technically it belonged to Texas, which belonged to Mexico, which was rebelling against Spain. Spain didn't concede Mexican independence until September 21, 1821. Nobody bothered Jean Lafitte.

THERE, in 1818, young Jim Bowie went and made his deal with Jean Lafitte to buy every slave the pirate could supply at a flat rate of one dollar a pound. That averaged $140 a slave. Louisiana planters believed their plantations would go wilderness again without slave labor. They paid from $500 to $1,000 each for husky Negroes. Slave prices were soaring in 1818.

For it had become illegal then to import African slaves into the United States. Fast American sloops-of-war, shallow-draft gunboats, patrolled the coasts. United States customs men kept alert watch ashore. But young Jim Bowie had studied the law and found the loophole.

Under the law, when an informer "tipped off" the customs man and a slave cargo was seized, the slaves were to be sold at public auction. Half the money they brought went to the informer. But more important yet, the slaves became legal property inside the United States. They could be transported, bought, sold. Galveston Island was only a short hop from the Louisiana coast. There was a wide margin of profit between $140 and the $500 to $1,000 a slave would bring inside the border.

Jim Bowie had figured out the plan he put before his brothers. They would pool funds, buy cheap through a dummy an old but seaworthy schooner. Loading it with slaves at Galveston Island, they would land it secretly on the Louisiana coast. They would go to the nearest customs men and "inform on themselves." They had found an "ownerless abandoned slave cargo." At the ensuing auction, a dummy would bid in the slaves for them. The three husky Bowie brothers would circulate among possible bidders, and make it a personal and unhealthy affair for any man who tried to outbid them. They would get half their own money back as informers. Then they would sell the slaves on their slave-hungry plantations up the bayous.

Jim Bowie in command, the three brothers plunged on black ivory. They lost just one cargo. They beached it too near a coastal Indian village. While they were absent informing the customs, the Indians freed the slaves and red and black men fled to the swamps.

From 1818 to 1821 Jim Bowie's personal profits were $65,000. It was a fortune then as now. He returned to Alexandria, a capitalist. He found Rapides feverish with land speculation. Land-hungry immigrants were pouring in. Louisiana cotton and sugar meant swift wealth. Newly-organized banks were lavish with loans. Men bought huge tracts of land, sold them at huge profits. Jim Bowie sank his capital in land, borrowed money and bought more. Real riches loomed.

Visiting his brother Rezin one day, he saw a knife he admired. Rezin had designed it. His plantation blacksmith, Snowden, had forged it from a steel bar. It was a weapon of unusual shape, pointed, single-edged, with an oddly-curved back planned to strengthen the nine-inch blade with its six-inch haft. A man could use it as a hunting knife, a butchering knife, or a fighting knife. Jim Bowie hefted and handled it, admired it, and Rezin gave it to him.

Knife or dagger duels were common then under the code of honor. Men faced each other, each with knife in right hand, their left hands grasping opposite corners of a bandana handkerchief, and at the signal started to cut, thrust and parry. The man who let go the handkerchief while alive and conscious went branded a coward. Few men went out unarmed. "Jim Bowie and his big knife" were part of the conversation in Rapides.

RAPIDES was hot with passionate politics in the 1820's. Two factions were bitter; the Old-Timers and the New-Comers. Thomas Jefferson Wells, General Montfort Wells, Samuel Levi Wells and James Madison Wells, four wealthy brothers, planters in the Bayou Boeuf section, were Old-Timers. They were close friends of Jim Bowie. In that day, your friends' enemies were your enemies, politically and personally.

William Fristoe, the Old-Timer sheriff of Rapides, died in office in 1823. The New-Comers, by some sharp political maneuvering, got young Major Norris Wright appointed to fill the unexpired term. In 1826 they managed to elect him sheriff. Jim Bowie had campaigned hotly against him.

Norris Wright was slim, pale, frail. But he needed no pity. He was the deadliest pistol-shot in Rapides. His courage and coolness under fire were absolute. He had fought five duels, killed his man in two of them. He came from Baltimore to Alexandria, worked as clerk in the general merchandise store of Martin & Bryant. He helped organize a new bank in Alexandria, was elected to its board of directors.

Bad luck hit Jim Bowie. Several bad crop years came in swift succession. Then the floods overflowed his lands. He faced the fact that he must borrow more money or lose his fortune. He went to the Alexandria bank and applied for a loan. A few days later, to his incredulous wrath, he was told the loan had been refused. He corked his anger, made quiet inquiries. He learned that the directors had been willing at first to grant the loan, but Norris Wright had argued his fellow-directors into voting it down.

They met on an Alexandria street a few days later. Wright pulled his pistol. Jim Bowie rushed without drawing weapon. Wright fired. His bullet raked Jim Bowie's ribs. But a second later Bowie's big hands had closed on Wright. Jim tore the pistol from the sheriff's hand and hurled it far. Then, systematically, he set about killing Wright with his bare hands. He had pounded him into unconsciousness and was choking him to death when bystanders rushed in and pulled them apart. All Rapides knew now it was only a matter of time before one killed the other.

CURIOUS characters took the stage before that time came. One was Colonel Robert A. Crain. He came from Virginia to Alexandria. From Dr. John Rippy he rented a plantation on Bayou Rapides. He ran up bills. When creditors came to collect, he challenged them to duels "for insulting a Virginia gentleman." Dr. Rippy came to collect the rent. Colonel Crain offered his note. Dr. Rippy said he preferred cash. Colonel Crain shot and killed him "for insulting a Virginia gentleman." Colonel Crain had allied himself politically with Sheriff Wright and the New-Comers. He was never arrested.

Levin Luckett complained to the Rapides grand jury that Colonel Crain had taken some of Luckett's Negro slaves outside the state of Louisiana. That was serious. The grand jury indicted Colonel Crain. Before the case came to trial, Luckett rode into Alexandria and asked the district attorney to withdraw the charge. He had just married Colonel Crain's daughter, he explained; he didn't want to prosecute his father-in-law. The district attorney said he had no legal right to quash the case. Sheriff Wright was a political power in the state capitol now. The Louisiana Legislature passed a bill granting the district attorney of Rapides the right to quash the case against Colonel Crain. It was quashed.

Next Colonel Crain persuaded Richmond E. Cuny, rich planter of Rapides, to endorse his note for $10,000. The note fell due. Colonel Crain defaulted.

He was execution-proof. The note-holder sued the endorser, won judgment; Cuny had to sell slaves to pay the debt. His son, General Samuel Cuny, took his shotgun and called on Colonel Crain, demanding that the Virginia gentleman make good. The colonel refused. The general shot the colonel in the right arm and departed. The Cuny and Wells families were close friends.

Alfred Blanchard and Carey Blanchard, brothers, had come from Virginia to Rapides, settling on Bayou Jean de Jean. They married into Colonel Crain's family. Alfred Blanchard drank somewhat deeply, one day, and shot Thomas Jefferson Wells, wounding him seriously.

Nerves were getting taut in Rapides.

Dr. Thomas H. Maddox was one of the most prominent physicians there. One who survives in history only as "a lady patient" confided to him a spicy piece of gossip involving General Montfort Wells. Dr. Maddox passed it along. The story spread.

General Montfort Wells heard the story, traced it to Dr. Maddox, called and demanded the name of the doctor's informant. Dr. Maddox refused to give it. Hot words followed. A few days later, General Montfort Wells, a shotgun on his arm, met Dr. Maddox on a public road in Alexandria, and without a word opened fire. The general was notoriously the worst shot in Rapides. He proved it then. He missed Dr. Maddox and hit an innocent bystander on the other side of the road.

Dr. Maddox returned home and sent his seconds to wait on General Wells with a formal challenge for a duel. General Wells ignored the challenge.

Colonel Robert A. Crain, that peppery Virginia gentleman, stepped into the situation. He sent his own challenge to General Wells, offering to substitute for his medical friend.

General Wells ignored that challenge, too.

Colonel Crain exploded with an ultimatum to General Wells:

"Since you will not fight a duel like a gentleman under the Code of Honor, we will make it a street fight the next time you come into Alexandria."

The Wells brothers held family council. Samuel Levi Wells, bachelor brother of General Wells, sent Dr. Maddox his acceptance of the doctor's challenge. Their seconds conferred. They selected pistols as the weapons, the Vidalia Sand Bar as the place.

It was a No Man's Land thrusting out from a thicket of willows into the Mississippi River, at Vidalia, on the Louisianan shore, just across from the high bluffs on which rose Natchez, Mississippi. It stands there yet, submerged only in times of flood.

FIRE and gunpowder never were worse bedfellows than the two parties that set out for Natchez.

With Dr. Maddox went Sheriff Norris Wright, Colonel Robert A. Crain, Alfred Blanchard, Carey Blanchard, and Dr. Denny, a surgeon.

With Samuel Levi Wells went his brother, Thomas Jefferson Wells (who had been shot by Alfred Blanchard), James Bowie (who had been shot by Norris Wright and had nearly killed him barehanded), General Samuel Cuny (who had shot Colonel Crain in the arm trying to collect on that defaulted note), George C. McWhorter (later to be state treasurer of Louisiana) and Dr. Cuny, brother of General Samuel Cuny, as their surgeon.

They slept at Natchez the night of September 18, 1827. Shortly after dawn they took the ferry to Vidalia. They walked out on the sand bar. By agreement, the two duellists, each with a second and a surgeon, walked farther out on the bar to fight, while the other friends stayed near the shore.

Facing each other ten paces apart,

Dr. Maddox and Samuel Levi Wells exchanged shots twice. They missed both times. Then Wells advanced with hand outstretched, the family courage proved. They shook hands. Duellists, seconds, surgeons, started for the willow-thicket "where refreshments had been provided" if peace should be the outcome. But those toasts were never drunk.

For Jim Bowie and General Samuel Cuny saw Samuel Levi Wells coming toward them, and stepped out to meet him. There was a stir among the group of the friends of Dr. Maddox. They interpreted the Bowie-Cuny advance as a violation of the agreement. They too strode forth, calling out belligerently.

General Samuel Cuny looked back and saw Colonel Robert A. Crain striding pugnaciously toward him.

Remembering what this man's defaulted note had cost his father, General Cuny drew his pistol.

Colonel Crain drew his pistol, fired, missed General Cuny, and shot Jim Bowie through the hip. General Cuny fired his pistol, and hit Colonel Crain in the upper arm.

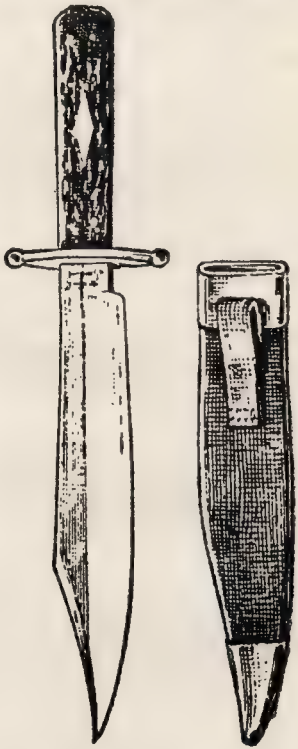
Then the bloodless duel became a bloody battle.

Jim Bowie drew his big knife. He started for Colonel Crain, who had drawn a second pistol. Dr. Cuny, the surgeon, had seized his brother, General Samuel Cuny, and was striving to keep him out of the mêlée. But General Cuny wrenched himself free, and, empty pistol in hand, rushed at Colonel Crain. Crain fired. General Cuny fell. He died a few minutes later.

Jim Bowie's speed was retarded by that pistol ball in his hip. But steadily, inexorably, knife in hand, he advanced on Colonel Crain. They came face to face. Colonel Crain clubbed his empty pistol and smashed at Jim Bowie's head, trying to brain him with the butt. Blood poured from a long gash the weapon opened in Jim's scalp.

Jim Bowie staggered back; sank to his knees. But he rose. He wiped the streaming blood from his eyes with his coat sleeve. Grimly he bored in again. His right hand held the knife, point up, as a fencer holds a foil. His left hand reached for a grip on his foe.

It was too much for the redoubtable Colonel Crain. That Virginia gentleman turned and ran like a rabbit.



Again Jim Bowie wiped his eyes clear of blood. Now he saw Major Norris Wright, sheriff of Rapides, advancing on him with an unsheathed sword-cane in his hand. Why the deadly pistol-shot used a sword-cane that day no man will ever know.

Wright lunged. Jim Bowie strove to parry with his knife-blade, but missed. The sword-cane blade, short, triangular, grooved, needle-pointed, ran him through the chest. Wright wrenched to recover it. The blade broke off in the wound.

In that fleeting moment, Jim Bowie's empty left hand got its grip on his enemy. His knife-blade went to work. When he released his left-handed grip, a dead man dropped to the sand. The Bowie-Wright feud had ended.

Then they found Alfred Blanchard wounded by a pistol ball. Nobody ever knew who shot him.

They buried Norris Wright and Samuel Cuny side by side. They ferried the three wounded men back to Natchez. The wounds of Crain and Blanchard were trivial. But the doctors said Jim Bowie would die by morning. He fooled them.

During his convalescence, he visited Captain Reese Fitzpatrick, the famous Natchez gunsmith and armorer. The two improved the original weapon. Captain Fitzpatrick left the specifications:

"Weight, one pound. Total length, fifteen inches; blade nine inches, haft six inches. One edge. Lower third of edge curves convex to meet needle-point. Lower third of back curves concave to meet point. Blade must be forged so it quivers at touch of hand. Must have spring and rebound of Damascus sword. Edge must be keen as lightning-flash."

Captain Fitzpatrick and General Felix Houston worked out a device that fastened the Bowie-knife to a rifle-muzzle like a bayonet. The weapon became enormously popular. Cutlers worked overtime, forging to fill orders. Men said of the true Bowie-knife that you could drive its point through a silver dollar without turning the edge. Side by side with the American repeating rifle and six-shooter, it went with the frontier, helped win the West.

JIM BOWIE recovered and returned to Rapides. He found popular sentiment there against him. Stung to the quick, he sold his last acre and slave and went to Texas.

He prospered at first. In San Antonio he married. Children were born. But a sudden pestilence left Jim Bowie a childless widower. Tuberculosis attacked his giant frame. He sought excitement anywhere, lashed his ravaged body on with whisky. When the Texans rose in rebellion against Mexico under General Sam Houston, he joined them.

Side by side with Buck Travis he helped defend the Alamo. Helping mount a cannon on a platform inside the walls, he slipped, fell, was hurt badly. Then an icy "norther" smote the one hundred eighty-one Texans who were holding four thousand Mexicans at bay. Jim Bowie went down with pneumonia.

They propped him up on his cot that morning of March 6, 1836, when General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, raging because he had been held at bay since February 23 by this handful of men, hurled his full force at the Alamo's walls. Twice, incredibly, the one hundred eighty-one repulsed the four thousand. Then the Mexicans came swarming over.

On that cot, unable to stand, Jim Bowie was one of the last five Americans to die. He was still propped up on his cot, knife in hand, two empty pistols on the floor, a rampart of dead Mexicans in front of him, when a Mexican soldier stood in the doorway and shot him.

His enemies knew him. Drunk with blood and victory, they tossed his shattered body on their bayonets "as farmers with pitchforks toss hay."

And no man knows what became of the knife of the man whose name it bears to this day, after it dropped from his lifeless hand when that bullet pierced his heart.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

TALBOT MUNDY gives us more sidelights on the settings of his novelettes of Tros.

One of the things I like especially about Mundy's historical yarns is their apparent modernity. His characters are motivated by the same deep and fundamental emotions that motivate all the people we know. When Tros gets mad, it isn't for some mystic or involved historical reason—anybody, then or now, would get hot about the collar. The fact that Tros wears no collar, and the rest of us do, makes no difference at all. It doesn't occur to us.

Also, the conversation is natural. A number of historical stories come to our magazine, and most of them make you pant for air in a cloud of mummy dust. "Prithee!" say all the popinjays, and the writer tangles you in ruffles, trips you over harquebuses, confounds and confuses you with halidoms and bodkins until a poor reader, who is just an innocent fellow trying to follow a story, collapses with a clank upon the rivets in his lower backplate while the contents of a museum are being dumped upon his dented capeline and all the macaronis are saying in chorus "Fie! Fie!"

We have to put a pox and postage upon a good many historical stories because only historians could understand them.

I WONDER how many people who read history for fun (which is the only way to read) have noticed the, so to speak, spiritual resemblance between Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth of England. There are some imaginative students of history who maintain, with a good deal of logical argument, that Queen Elizabeth may have been a reincarnation of Cleopatra. That may be sense or nonsense, but it is at least an interesting theory.

I have imagined Tros as a sort of spiritual ancestor of Sir Francis Drake, who could not possibly have got away for his famous voyage around the world without the queen's knowledge, consent and assistance. Like Elizabeth, Cleopatra was determined to hold her throne against all comers, at anyone's expense.

Cleopatra finds it fairly easy to delay Tros' departure, by compelling him to do Herculean chores. Her own job was so difficult that she had plenty of excuse for, as Tros describes it, cat-and-mousing him. She was too clever, and not wise enough to deal with him straightforwardly. Her character is changing very swiftly, now that she is maturing and no longer has Caesar to direct her policy. What she needs is a man. Her whole reign is the story of a woman's need for a man to supply the qualities which she lacks. Given the right man to lead her armies, she might have become the greatest ruler the world has ever known. A naturally gay and high-spirited girl, well aware of her genius and of the importance of sex in a world of warriors, and perfectly aware that Rome intends to grab Egypt at the first opportunity, she changes in spite of her natural charm into a treacherous and cynically ruthless despot. That Tros won't even pretend to love her, mortifies her. That he loves her sister, enrages her. But she is practical. Since he won't be her lover, he shall be her unofficial agent, whether he likes it or not. I imagine that not less than ninety per cent of the scandalous tales about Cleopatra, when they were not the pure inventions of scandal-mongers, were based on her efforts to find a man fit to share her throne.

The following random notes may be of interest. The shipwrights of Rhakotis, which was the western quarter of the city of Alexandria, turned out excellent vessels built of cedar imported from Lebanon. Their skill was

developed by the demand for ships that could carry huge cargoes of corn.—The Jewish residential quarter was at the eastern end of the city, but they were not forbidden to do business elsewhere, and most of the big factories and warehouses had fallen into Jewish hands.—The Egyptian government of that day had a very highly developed banking system, but private hoards of gold, of any considerable quantity, were kept in the temples, where they were safe enough except from invasion by an alien army. The Jews, however, in Alexandria, and all through the Levant, conducted a very efficient banking system of their own.

The ancient world thoroughly despised sailors, who were treated more or less as animals, and behaved themselves accordingly. War crews were marines, that is to say soldiers detailed for duty at sea; they, too, despised the real seamen. I have imagined Tros as having different ideas about it.—There was probably no port in the world at that time, excepting Alexandria, where Tros had friends and money, where he could have put in for repairs to his trireme without being plundered. Piracy was a major industry, and governments were just as bad pirates as anyone else. His trireme would certainly have been seized at any Roman port. Pigeon post was very highly developed. News traveled by that means, from temple to temple, at great speed. This gave the priests a political value that they might have found otherwise hard to sustain.—Most historians of the period seem to have overlooked the importance of Cassius in the Near East. Anthony, Octavian and Lepidus shelved their mutual hatred and formed the triumvirate in Rome simply and solely because Cassius held a key-position in Syria and was likely to become strong enough to defeat all three of them. Had Cassius, who was one of Caesar's murderers, been a man of Caesar's genius and guts, he could easily have seized Egypt after he became proconsul in Syria, and with all that enormous wealth at his disposal he could almost certainly have defeated Antony and Octavian. But Cassius was a piker. He wasted his time raping Syria and Palestine, imposing impossible taxes, and trying, through spies and agents, to start something in Egypt that would give him an excuse to invade. Cleopatra, who couldn't possibly have resisted an invasion by even five or six Roman legions, was too clever for him and much too wise to trust her own corrupt and mercenary army.

Buying cheap slaves, putting them to school, and selling them as expert accountants, butlers, dancers, acrobats, actors, prostitutes and so forth, was one of the most profitable industries of the period.

India was an almost unknown country, but the trade with India had already assumed importance, weapons of war from Alexandria being the principal goods sent in exchange for Indian silks and spices. India was a good market, too, for Cleopatra's emeralds, which were a royal monopoly.

In a country as highly organized but weakly militarized as Egypt, the system of holding hostages was all-important. The Greek upper classes of such cities as Heliopolis and Memphis, who were savagely taxed and exasperated by all sorts of impositions, were restrained from too much treason, and almost altogether from rebellion, by the fact that their sons and daughters were at court, where they had to be extravagantly supported by their parents. Their lives would have been instantly forfeited if their parents had been caught in rebellion. Patriotism, and even nationalism, had not yet been invented, but family ties were immensely strong.

Very little is actually known about Charmion, beyond that she and Iras are said to have died with the queen. Iras, who may have been the queen's hairdresser, was a Persian. But Charmion was a Greek, and perhaps a virgin. I have imagined her as in love with Tros, and more bitter against him for refusing to love the queen than for rejecting her own acidulous embraces. Charmion was probably a pious aristocrat—perhaps a sort of Alexandrine D.A.R. developing into a manhater and a very zealous spy.

To the Greek Alexandrine, Egypt was a land of dark mystery from which he drew his revenues. Even Cleopatra, spirited adventuress though she was, during all her reign is only known to have made one journey up the Nile.

I invented Boidion. There is absolutely no historical proof of the existence of any such woman. But royal bastards were as frequent as almost any other royal indiscretion, and there were numbers of pretenders to the throne of Egypt, most of whom came to a violent end after feeble efforts to gain a following. I may have actually "invented" a "real" character. I feel positive that someone really was substituted for Arsinoe, although it would take too much space to give my reasons for believing it.

Nearly all rebellions and revolutions begin with very small numbers; they only become dangerous after the first substantial success.—The treason of such a man as Alexis is quite typical of the period. Caesar had the same sort of experience with his intimates.

Whole armies used to change sides and allegiance in the course of a day.

Cleopatra believed that the whole of Syria was rightfully hers; her suggestion that Tros should make himself king of Syria was logically sound.

Alexandria was the home of ribald song, and many of the songs were sacrilegious.

Tros' solution of the Arsinoe-Boidion problem was, of course, stark treason. Even though the queen had given him discretion, he certainly stretched it beyond tolerable limits and laid himself open, if discovered, to any vengeance she should care to impose. That she was willing to put him to work again instead of having him executed, suggests that she had far more guts than any other ruler of that day.

G. FREDERIC PELHAM, Jr., tells us of his background for the strange events in his story, "The Kitten."

I left my home in Westchester County in 1913, at the age of sixteen, and headed West. I spent months in Montana, Wyoming and thereabouts, riding fences, surveying the desert for irrigation projects, building railroads into the sugar beet territory, threshing wheat, and waiting on tables in boarding houses for my grub and a can of tobacco a week. Coming home, I went to the other extreme and studied art for a couple of years, until I landed a job surveying the Lehigh Valley Railroad from New York to Buffalo. I quit this job to go to the Mexican border with the National Guard in 1916. The next year was spent in Spartansburg, S. C., with the regiment which sailed for France early in 1918.

I was on the British Front for several months where I won a Commission and was transferred to the American Front just in time to get into the Chateau Thierry stunt and receive a piece of H. E. in the right hip. Juvigny followed, where our outfit formed the spear-head for Mangin's 10th French Army in its attack at the Chemin des Dames. The Foreign Legion and the Moroccans relieved us, going over our heads and into the leaden hail like boy scouts on a hike. Then they shoved us into the Argonne where we cracked the Kriemhilde-Stellung. I pulled out after twenty days of it with a dose of mustard gas and a M. G. bullet in my left knee.

After hospitalization I was made an instructor in the Officers' Training School outside of Lyons. After the Armistice, I transferred back to my original Division, came home and severed my connections with the military at once, and forever.

The story of the "Kitten" is based upon actual facts. Our Scout Platoon Lieutenant and thirteen of his men met their deaths near Romange, in the Argonne, as described in the story. I simply transferred the locale to the British Front and worked up the explanation from the German side in the only way that I could figure their deaths to have occurred. "The Kitten" is, incidentally, my first piece of fiction to be published.

AUSTIN PHELPS, of Orlando, Florida, gives us a close-up of an *Ask Adventure* expert.

I wonder how many of even the regular readers realize the amount of care and research going into an *Ask Adventure* reply?

I've read *Adventure* twenty years and have occasionally written for advice. The reply I took as a matter of course, as I believe the majority of the users of this service do.

But when moving to this section from the north I found that if I was to continue my habits of roaming thru the woods it would be necessary to know something of immediate first aid treatment of snake bite. Now, before the Chamber of Commerce hops on me, I'll admit I have yet to see a snake within five miles of town, but when you go into swamp country—well, Hapsburg Liebe will have to make you believe that story.

I started to write Dr. Fordyce and learned he had moved to this identical town. He responded to my letter and enclosed a personal note and two days later dropped in. When I returned his visit I had a chance to see the pains that man takes to make his information accurate and up-to-date.

Honestly, he must have moved down here with two freight trains! From floor to ceiling, along one side of a 10 x 14 room are portable book racks that hold medical texts, books on outdoor life, many his own, and authoritative works on motor boating, camping and health. The other wall is pretty well taken up with blue print files of tents and camping equipment. Kits and first aid sets fill a bin the full length of the room, and in the garage and on the premises are exactly twenty-seven types of tents undergoing tests. Mess kits and water containers occupy still another section, and his correspondence files would do justice to a small insurance office.

He laid before me letter after letter from manufacturers of snake bite equipment; from the laboratories producing antivenin; from acknowledged leaders in the handling of snake bite cases from all parts of the world. To top it off we visited the van Merebeke Labora-

tories and saw dissections of rattler and moccasin heads, and vials with fangs of different type and shape showing the different methods of introduction of the venom. We saw tables of the amount injected at each strike, and the amount of antivenin necessary to neutralize it in both test tube and body. Potency of the antivenin after keeping for periods of years were shown. Different types of suction syringes were on display, and actual samples of the venom.

Now all this you might consider a pretty complete return for a three cent stamp, but Doc had another one to pull. He had heard of a 16 foot rattler taken from a nearby swamp, and moccasins larger than your thigh and nothing would satisfy him but that we must make a tour thru these swamps and actually observe the snake, his action when disturbed, when aroused, and just how far he really could strike. Privately, I think he went with a faint wish that one of us would be bitten that he might try out the kits in a practical field demonstration.

Securing the aid of Nelson, a local naturalist, we started into an almost impenetrable swamp. It was my first introduction to a snake's home on such intimate circumstances, as at times it was easier to crawl thru the vines and palmettos and the element of surprise was all in favor of the snake, but Doc just reveled in it.

I'm sorry to report that we saw but five snakes and could catch none, but your first aid editor was not long discouraged. So now we're to take a motor boat up the St. Johns right into the jungle and if we don't meet snakes there—

FROM Henry T. Brummett, of Long Beach, California, comes a letter about the "herd" of chinchillas being developed at sea-level in this country after coming from the cold, thin air of the highest Andes.

I am writing to correct an article on chinchillas in your magazine printed in answer to a question by Mr. W. O. Greenleaf of San Jose, Calif. This article, or letter, was so very far wrong that I felt called upon to correct it.

Chinchillas (genuine South American) can, and are, being raised profitably in captivity—right here in California. I might add that this is the only place outside of South America they are being raised.

In 1928 a law was passed in Chile forbidding trapping chinchillas for pelts or export. This law was passed covering a period of five years and has been extended for another period of five years. There have been passed similar laws in Peru and Bolivia since 1928. This information was given me by the American Consul Generals located in all the above mentioned countries. I was also informed that the animals cost $1,000.00 each captured alive—price may be slightly higher in case of a particularly desirable specimen. I wrote other countries in South America but was informed that chinchillas were to be found only in the above named countries.

Contrary to Mr. Young's reply—chinchilla fur has very long hair, measuring from one to two inches in length. The skin is not tough—in fact, it is less tough and durable than rabbit fur, and is so rated by furriers. The hair is unbelievably fine, and grows in little tufts similar to a milkweed tassel where it joins the skin. This peculiar fact and the fineness of the individual hairs accounts for the utter impossibility of successfully imitating genuine chinchilla fur. This fur ranges in color from a light slate-gray to a dark blue-gray. The latter is worth more. I have quotations from several leading fur houses of from $5 to $250 a pelt. I should say that the average price for prime chinchilla would be in the neighborhood of $200.00. Chinchillas raised here in the U.S. are not, as yet, being pelted and placed on the open market. The entire output at present is more or less destined for sale as breeding animals. The price for a proven pair of breeders is $3,200.00.

Chinchillas are of about the same size as a large gray squirrel and are members of the rodent family. They are found above the 12,000 foot level in the Andes. It takes time and patience to acclimatize them to sea-level atmosphere. The man who originally brought them to this country started with 6 pairs and finally arrived with 4 females and 3 males, which formed the nucleus of the present herd of more than 500 chinchillas. I might also say that there would have been many more had not 36 of the best of the flock been stolen in 1929 and taken out of the country. Only one of this group of 36 animals is alive today. These animals breed as often as three times a year. They are entirely vermin-free—in fact, vermin just can't seem to get off fast enough when placed in chinchilla fur. I imagine this is partially on account of the extreme fineness of the hair. They are purely vegetarian and seem to thrive on nearly anything.

THE good old harmless tarantula—he can be "given to a baby as a playfellow, with no harm done except per-

haps to the tarantula." Shirley C. Hulse of Bedford, Pennsylvania, sends a clipping from the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, quoting Dr. W. J. Baerg of the University of Arizona. Has any reader who has ever been bitten by a tarantula, and remembers the exact spot of the contact, got anything to say about this? Dr. Baerg is a well-known scientist, and he has done research work with tarantulas.

A WHILE ago I asked if any reader knew of a friendship between a bear and a dog. A man had shown me a bear in a cage, and a hole under the cage that he said a hound dog came through every day to play with the bear. I didn't see the dog. The man looked honest, but a man looks his most honest while he is taking somebody in. I couldn't be sure.

A comrade from Englehart, Ontario—T. P. Bowen, postmaster—comes to the Camp-Fire with ample proof that scepticism can go too far. He sends photographs of a grown bear, Esther, playing with various dogs. Micky, a small dog of sorts, nips at her heels, stands beside her, walks around with her. Rex, a big police dog, creeps up to steal a bone. Leo, a Newfoundland, keeps a wary distance and evidently has the same doubts that I had of the man who told me the story.

"Micky," writes Mr. Bowen, "will crawl into Esther's den and stay there with her. The bear will hold the dog down with a paw, nip one of its ears, but never too hard, and the dog will come out of the den in a hurry but after a few minutes will be back in again with no hard feelings.

"The pictures were taken at Doug's Place, a tourist camp seventeen miles north of Engelhart on the Ferguson Highway."

AND just as we go to press (May first) comes this letter from H. G. Hutchinson, secretary of the Lake Penage Fish and Game Association, of Whitefish, Ontario:

After waiting two weeks for the ice to go out, we got a load of mail. About the first thing always is to grab *Adventure* and turn to Camp-Fire before looking over the rest.

First, I was much interested in Gordon MacCreagh's note on black panthers. Frank Buck has brought some twenty of them to the United States, claims they are the same size as the spotted ones and shows a picture of a black and a spot drinking together.

This, of course, may mean nothing, but he says that the spots have been known to produce blacks in India, Southern China, Africa and to the point of practically establishing a new species in Malaya, where they outnumber the spots.

With all due respect to Carl Hagenbeck, it looks as though the black is a sport.

Paul Eipper, in "Animals Looking At You," tells of a baby black that was raised by a bitch. He tells us that at first it resembled a grey woolen ball, soon to have spots show and then change to shining black.

Turning over the page I came on to the article by yourself telling about the case of a bear and a dog being chummy and asking for further evidence of such queer buddies.

Two years ago we had two cub bears at our camp and about one hundred fishermen from the States witnessed the antics of these bears with Trapper, a small black dog that looked as if it were trying to be a spaniel. Trapper was an Indian dog given to our six year old son when he took the rifle carried by an Indian and shot a full sized bear. The Indian was so surprised that he just stammered and said, "Boy!—I give you my dog!"

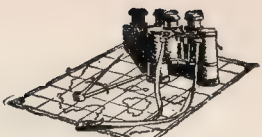
These cubs, to get back to the subject, were cross and about the only animals we ever tried to tame without success, yet they loved the dog.

They tried to play with him, but he seemed to resent any undue familiarity and when they tried to roll him over he would go to war pronto and scare the bears so that they simply rolled over backwards out of the way. When we finally turned the bears loose they refused to run away or to come near us, but tagged around with the dog.

Many thanks to Comrades Bowen and Hutchinson. It is clear that suspicion can go too far, as in the case of this editor and that Newfoundland dog Leo.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE



Information you can't get elsewhere

IN a recent issue we told the modern limey that he could get his limejuice from the Snowcrest Manufacturing Company in Boston. Sorry, the address for that company is Salem, Mass.

R. H. Macy & Co., New York, N. Y., also distributes limejuice.

THE Orient is mysterious, but not with the mystery of secret societies.

Request:—I should like information on secret societies of Chinese women and the names of books dealing with the subject.

—H. A. Dowler, Empress, Canada.

Reply by Mr. Seward Cramer:—I hate to disappoint you, but you have asked about a subject that is practically non-existent. Women, in China, have only recently come out of the home and into public life. For centuries, all women of any standing spent their entire life within the homes of their fathers or husbands. The only women seen were coolie-women, farm workers or boat women and they never made themselves noticed. The only women to appear in public were sing-song girls and prostitutes and they were restricted in their movements. It is only within recent times that all types of women have appeared in public.

With the advent of communism and the revolution, some women's societies have sprung up but very little is known of them as they are political in nature. To my knowledge, these are the only secret societies to which women have been admitted in China.

The guild system has been prevalent in China since long before the days of Marco Polo but the basis of this system has been the family. But these guilds were not secret societies as we understand the term. They were rather associations of craftsmen and artisans.

The tong groups that we have in America have no counterpart in China. As a matter of fact, I don't think that returning members of a tong are still held to owe allegiance to their chiefs. There have been attempts to start a Masonic fraternity in China but they are not sanctioned by the Grand Lodges.

There are only two organizations that might come within your meaning. They are the T'ai-pings and the Boxers. Both were revolutionary in aspect. The former were religious fanatics in addition. Any good history of China would give a discussion of them. I might recommend particularly Wilhelm's "History of China." Two other books are Reinsch "Intellectual and Political Development of the Far East" and W. J. Hail "T'seng Kuo-fen and the T'ai-ping Rebellion."

A SPECIFIC question and a specific answer—about ballistics.

Request:—Can a .30-30 cartridge be fired from a .30-40 rifle? If so, will the bottle neck of the shell be blown, swelled or possibly split?

My understanding is that, being the same

size diameter bullet and taking the same size bore, the .30-30 can be fired in a rifle chambered for a .30-40. There will be a space that will allow a flip between the position of the shorter .30-30 shell and the chamber for the .30-40 and doubtless will upset the ballistics and lose much of the effectiveness of the shot, but it will still punish severely at point blank range. The .30-30 shell, not fitting snug into the chamber, will have a little space around the neck that will be open, and with the explosion of the charge will swell or blow until filling the larger chamber—possibly split. This would be at once apparent if trying to fit the .30-30 shell so fired into a .30-30 chamber, and the shell would not go in, but would be like a "swelled case" that causes a machine gun stoppage. I recall that the 75 mm. ammunition of the French would fire in the German 77 mm. gun, but not vice versa, and as the charge and length of shell is the principal difference between the .30-30 and .30-40, would not it be as outlined above?

—C. E. Kearney, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—I have just been experimenting to find what I can tell you.

My advice is *don't* do it. It can be done, for I just did it, by the only really dependable method; viz, seating a case in the breech of my Krag and firing it.

The base of the case is swollen, and a slot is split in it a half inch long, with a quarter inch one at right angles to the first. The case is distorted a bit, and the forward part has swollen to the dimensions of the Krag or .30-40 case neck. The bullet passed through the bore all right, and on into the pile of firewood.

There was a lot of gas leakage, the boltface and the breech of the barrel in the receiver being well blackened, and there was considerable escape of gas through the port and receiver well.

It can be done, but is decidedly not a success; I think there is danger both to the rifle and the firer if this is attempted. I doubt if any accuracy would be present in such a combination, at any rate.

THERE'S the gurgling spring, and yonder, perhaps, the gold. And here's the law to join the two.

Request:—My partners and I have been prospecting a group of claims in Nevada. They are situated in the foothills overlooking a desert. There is no water for several miles, except a group of springs about a half mile up-hill from our location. If we do strike anything on the claims worthwhile, its value is lessened by the lack of water. We would like to file on the springs, to insure a supply of water, but the ground between is apparently barren of minerals as are the springs, although they are on government property as well as the land in between the claims and the springs.

What we want to do is to make available water for our needs, including a right-of-way from the springs to the claims.

What do you suggest?

—R. H. Forney, Lakeport, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The natural procedure in acquiring water to use on any type of mining claim is to take out a "water right" at any point where the water is available. If, as your letter states, the springs lie uphill from your claims there should be no difficulty in conveying that water to the claims by ditch, flume or pipeline, or all three in conjunction. The chief preliminary would, of course, be to determine by estimate of the amount of water in the springs, whether they will afford all you require at all times, especially in dry season.

Taking out a water right is a simple process, but three things must always exist to constitute a valid appropriation of the water: Intention to apply it to a valid use; its diversion from natual channel by ditch, pipe, etc.; its application within reasonable period.

The last element doesn't entail unusual effort or expenditure. The law is rather vague on this point, stating that due diligence must be used to afford water at the project in a reasonable time—this depending upon circumstances in each case. The right to use does not begin with the actual use of the water, but is as of the date when the locator constructs his dam, ditch, flume, etc., or starts to build them, providing the enterprise is carried on with reasonable diligence.

Procedure: Notice is posted at a point where water is taken out; copy is filed with local recording office within ninety days; ditch, flume, or pipeline, or all three, must be surveyed and actual work begun on it. The notice should contain and state the number of miner's inches desired to use; the location of point of diversion; the place where it is to be used; the purpose for which it is to be used. With, of course, the date and name of the locators. Printed forms of such notices can be obtained for a nickel at stores carrying legal blanks. One point is that in diverting water from any stream it must be after use returned to its natural channel, though I

can't see how that could apply to your spring source, nor do I believe it will.

The locating of any type of mining claims to cover the entire source and line of conveyance to point of use, doesn't give title to that water, nor protect your sole use of it, in law. That is, if you should locate an association group of placers to cover the ground and another party files a legal water right on the source, they cannot be prevented in law from using any part or all the water if needed. You can use water flowing over land to which you have title, but have thereby no legal rights in that water, as against one who has a right.

DOES any reader know about this queer fish?

Request:—My request pertains to that elusive and rather unknown sea fish, the grunyon. (Or is it, grunion?) I am told that during the late months of the year, (in California) generally autumn, these fish run. It seems the run must occur under highly peculiar circumstances; high tide and full moon must coincide. Then if the fish are willing the run takes place. They forthwith ride in on the waves and spawn on the sand.

At any rate, at the forecast of a grunyon-run the beaches are crowded with people lying in wait for the grunyon. They brandish wet gunny sacks, and splash around in the backwash of waves supposedly collecting them. A catch may run as high as forty or so. (By the way, they are, I'm told, silver in color, and range in size anywhere from three to seven inches.)

Now to the queer part. I have questioned many people who have participated in grunyon hunts. Some have claimed to have seen them sparkling in the moonlight; others claim to have eaten them; but I cannot find a single person who, when pinned down, will admit ever having caught any.

Is there such a thing as a grunyon, and can you tell me something about them?

—PAUL B. STILLMAN, Glendale, Calif.

Reply by Mr. John Thompson:—I can give you no more information on the subject of the grunyon than what you have. It has been a very elusive fish for me, and all my inquiries have brought just about the same results as yours. Suggest, to settle the matter, you write your fish commissioner.

LOOK at Mount McKinley before you leap to Mount Everest.

Request:—I plan to go to the Alaskan Range to test my mountain climbing ability and prepare for a more difficult and a greater conquest. Naturally Mount McKinley offers a challenge.

How many times, and when, has McKinley been climbed since Hudson Stuck first ascended it? Are there any printed books on ascent of it since the one of which Stuck is the author?

My reason is the same as of all who love the snowy peaks. McKinley is the first step of a five-year dream—that of climbing Mount Everest. I am well aware that it is a fantastic one, but not for me. Doctors have pronounced me physically fit, and if I can make sure of myself on McKinley, even though I do not ascend it, I shall turn to Everest. Two other men are with me. What is the ideal number of climbers? I put it at three. What mixture of liquid fuel do you prefer? Solid? Which, in your opinion, weight and burning hours considered, is the best?

If I can ascend Mount McKinley, which is a greater height from base to summit than Everest, I shall feel that I have more than a gambling chance.

The problem of Mount Everest, from studying accounts of the different expeditions, seems to be more of a physiological one than of merely mountaineering difficulties. Perfect acclimatization seems to be the answer.

—JAMES S. CREWS, Fort Sill, Okla.

Reply by Mr. T. S. Solomons:—I am much interested in your ambition to scale the summit of Everest; I explored, first climbed, and named many major mountain peaks in the west, here, and know something of the game. I was younger then and held life more ignorantly if not more lightly. It is a fact, which you may find strange, that notwithstanding my name has been in this magazine's list of experts as authority on Alaska and on mountaineering, yours is about the third or fourth inquiry I have had on the latter subject in the eighteen years I have been serving this department! And I am sorry I cannot, offhand, answer all your questions. I have not the printed data here.

Hudson Stuck published his book in 1914, as you probably know, and Belmore Brown the year earlier. The mountain was climbed a couple of years ago, you may remember, in a very expert and efficient manner, but I forget the names of the men. I have no doubt that the mountain has been climbed, the one peak or the other, by a number of parties since Hudson Stuck's time. While it is somewhat of a feat to succeed, the fact that no

publicity may have been given to such expeditions can reasonably be attributed to the dislike of many climbers to such publicity. Strong, active men who are experienced in snow and ice travel and are patient and intelligent can climb practically any mountain. At very high altitudes, however, it is, as you say, an almost purely physiological problem. Here the above qualities yield in importance to idiosyncrasy—the possession of a singularly well fitted heart, lung, and other organic equipment. However, to your questions:

Judge Wickersham has compiled, in recent years, a very complete bibliography of Alaska in its every phase, drawn from every species of published data. Undoubtedly you would find therein practically everything, except mere fugitive second or third class newspaper allusion, ever printed referring to McKinley. Another source might be the Mazamas Club of Portland (or is it Seattle?) and the Sierra Club, Mills Tower, San Franscisco, of which I have been a member since its organization about forty-four years ago. Write the president, Francis Farquhar, (mentioning my name) for specialized information referring both to McKinley and Everest.

As to liquid fuels, the Sierra boys may be more up to date on that. Personally I prefer a high grade gasoline used in a can I make myself, designed and perforated very carefully, into which I place sand when in use. However, special studies must have been made and I think the Sierra Club could refer you to them. My ideal number of actual climbers, meaning porters aside, is either two or three, depending on conditions. For the rope, three is undoubtedly better than two. For most other conditions two, in my opinion, is better than three. I'd hesitate to say as to McKinley, though I have a feeling that two for the final ascent would be at least as good as three. Again, team work of a trio who have been together a great deal, might be better than with two who are not perfectly coordinated. If I were to attack Everest I'd scheme out a way to put a first class, well-equipped camp as high as possible. I think that's one answer to the riddle.

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Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—Edgar S. Perkins, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—Howland Wood, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—John B. Thompson, care of *Adventure.*

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First Aid—Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Box 1208, Orlando, Fla.

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Football—John B. Foster, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

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Motor Boating—Gerald T. White, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—Major Chas. G. Percival, M.D., care of American Tourist Camp Ass'n, 152 West 65th St., New York, N. Y.

Mountain Climbing—Theodore S. Solomons, Yosemite, Calif.

Motorcycling—Chas. M. Dodge, 108 Winthrop Rd., Brookline, Mass.

Old Songs—Robert Frothingham, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—Chas. H. Hall, 446 Ocean Ave., Brookiyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—Julien Proskauer, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

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★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. Price, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

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Stamps—Dr. H. A. Davis, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

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Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

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Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure*.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroad: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Salvaging Sunken Treasure: *authentic information of salvageable treasure since 1588*—LIEUT. H. E. RIESENBERG, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure*.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LT. COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Coast Guard—COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (ret.), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Florida.

U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

★World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

The Sea, Part 1 *British and American Waters Ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands, Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea, Islands and Coasts.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESENBERG, care of *Adventure*. **2★***Antarctica*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care *Adventure*.

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 **★***Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China, Southern and Eastern China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **3** *Northern China and Mongolia*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Japan*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **5** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **6★***Palestine*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

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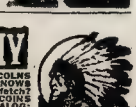

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